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COMICS SCENE

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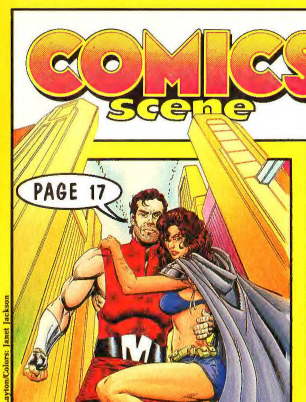

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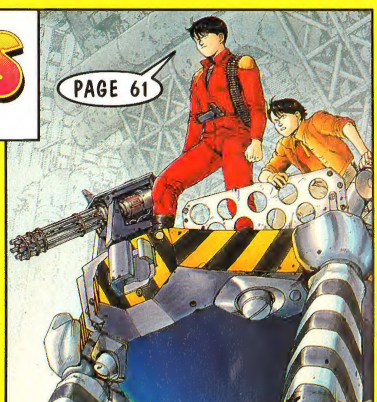

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Challengers Art: Brian Bolland/Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc.

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Get to Know Your

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA
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II
Sorry guys, but you have to read COMICS SCENE and STARLOG #165 to find out how you can win fabulous *Turtles* stuff.

Turtles Photo: John Brumley/Copyright 1990 Northshore Investments Ltd.

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Kevin Eastman & Peter Laird's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles will be back on the screen this spring to discover *The Secret of the Ooze*.

COMICS SCENE readers already know about the Turtles and their earlier adventures in comics (CS#1), cartoons (CS#5) and the cinema (CS#12, #13). Now, the Turtles are returning for a live-action encore directed by Michael Pressman, written by Todd W. Langen. In addition to the Turtles, it also stars David Warner and Paige Turco as the new April.

While you await *Turtles II*'s release (scheduled for March 22), you can win Teenage Mutant Ninja accessories:

Here's all you have to do: Send a postcard only (absolutely *no* envelopes please) with your *carefully printed* name and address (street/city/state/zip code) to Mutant Ninjas c/o COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Avenue South, 8th Flr, NY, NY 10016. Only one entry per person, please. Multiple entries will be disqualified. Neatness counts, too; illegible addresses must be disqualified. All decisions of the judges are final.

This contest is open to all except employees (and freelancers) of Golden Harvest Communications, New Line Cinema, Archie Comics, Murakami-Wolf-Swensen, Playmates Toys, Mirage Studios (and *any* of its other licensees *not* listed here) and the Starlog Group and their affiliates, subsidiaries, suppliers and advertising agencies. No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited by law.

All entries must be received in the COMICS SCENE offices no later than April 25, 1991. A random postcard drawing will be conducted the following day, with prizes sent out shortly thereafter. Please note: *No* responsibility is assumed for lost, misdirected or late entries and lost, misdirected or damaged-in-mail prizes.

And the prizes? Through the courtesy of New Line Cinema & Mirage Studios, they are:

First Prize: (10) An autographed *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comics collection.

Second Prize: (25) An official *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II* movie novelization.

Third Prize: (50) An official set of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* trading cards.

COMICS scene

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WORD BALLOONS

Rips in Time

Sometimes it can seem like you've never been away. You stop reading a comic for a few issues or even a few years, then you go back to it. And it's still the same.

Well, maybe not exactly the same. The Hulk is grey (or green). Clark Kent and Lois Lane are engaged. Spider-Man has lost his powers (again). The Flash—uhhh—*isn't* Barry Allen.

But the changes are often cosmetic—alterations made to update the characters and to provide new storyline variations on the same old themes. The point is that the heroes are still *recognizably* the same heroes—no matter what the changes in costume, identity, format or style. Green Lantern is Green Lantern is Green Lantern.

And there's nothing wrong with that. One reason I think we love certain characters is that familiarity, that sense of heroic *ritual* which belongs to their adventures. Before he's off on a case, Sherlock Holmes, with deerstalker hat and pipe, must utter, "The game's afoot, Watson!" Iron Man, no matter what his latest personal problems or his newest metallic duds, has to suit up for action. Billy Batson must cry, "Shazam!" and wait for lightning to strike before he's outfitted in that unlikely uniform and ready to fight evil.

No matter how long you've been away from them, when you see them again—they're familiar friends. And it doesn't even matter if the heroes themselves have been away as well. When they return, they're just the same. That's brought to mind this issue by several stories.

Let's say you're Rip Van Winkle, comics reader and expert sleeper, and you've been napping for five or 10 or 25-odd years. You awake this week and saunter to the newsstand (or comics shop) for a few of your favorites.

There you'll find the *Challengers of the Unknown*—the characters don't look the same and suddenly have real names, but they *are* the Challengers.

Not far away is *Angel & the Ape*—still funny after all these years, now under my friend Phil Foglio's auspices.

And *Magnus, Robot Fighter*—no longer drawn by Russ Manning, of course, yet continuing to do what he does best: smashing robots into itsy-bitsy teeny-tiny pieces.

A few racks over is *Kid Eternity*. He's not as well known as the others, but he, too, is back, looking as if he never aged.

Finally, there's *Indiana Jones*, the relative newcomer who debuted in 1981. Absent from the comics scene for only a few years, he's returning now for further adventures.

All of these comics haven't been around for *years*. Yet, as far as you, Rip Van Winkle, are concerned, they've never been away. And neither have such recently revived (or soon-to-be-returned) titles as *Aquaman, Planet of the Apes, Justice Society, Dr. Solar, The Demon, The Wild Wild West, The Guardians of the Galaxy* and others.

Sooner or later, Rip, everything old *will* be new again. It'll seem like you've never been away.

Your heroes, too.

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS for a further behind-the-scenes look at **The Rocketeer**...a pause at the animated kennels of **The Family Dog**...and lots more we haven't even figured out yet. The fun's in **COMICS SCENE #19, on sale April 23.**

LETTERING

Personal replies are impossible. Other fans & advertisers may contact readers whose letters are printed here. To **avoid** this, mark your letter "Please Withhold My Address." Otherwise, we retain the option to publish it. Write:
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue So., 8th Flr.
New York, NY 10016

...just a couple of corrections to the interview in COMICS SCENE #15.

Whilst superheroics clearly have their place in comics, I don't feel that the "challenge of comics" lies exclusively in exploring that area, as your subheadline suggests. Rather the opposite, in fact.

More importantly, I would like to correct the impression that Frank Miller and I are co-writers on *Give Me Liberty*. Frank writes the words, I draw the pictures!

Dave Gibbons
Address Withheld

...I feel myself compelled to write due to the other letters I've been reading in Lettering. Recently, people have written that your magazine "isn't what it used to be" or that "it's missing something" or that "the stories are lackluster." Some who have written say you spend too much time on television or movie material and not enough on comic books, also vice-versa. I'm writing to say your magazine is perfect, you guys are doing a great job, and please don't change a thing.

I bought issue #3 at my local comic shop and read it cover to cover. Never had I enjoyed any magazine so much. So, I subscribed and haven't missed an issue. Your magazine is truly for the loyal comic fan. I enjoy getting to know the people who create my comics through your articles. After reading your articles, I've read and enjoyed comics I otherwise would not have known about. Also, I think your articles on TV or movie projects are great. Granted, some adaptations of comics into the television/movie mode are not so good. But, good or bad, I like seeing my comic characters come to life and stimulate another part of my imagination.

Comics have been a part of my life for 20 years or so and I hope my children will be as enthused about them as I have been. When I was little, I had all the old comics: *Superman, Batman, JLA, The Avengers*. But, as so many people have experienced, Mom threw them out. I got back into collecting about five years ago and have built up a marvelous collection. In 20 years, I would like to pass this collection on to my son. I can think of no better gift. A part of this gift will be each of the COMICS SCENE magazines I've collected and the ones I will collect. So please, listen to a true comic fan. Keep doing what you're doing and don't change a thing. As I said, yours is the only magazine I read cover to cover. As long as you publish, I will subscribe.

Jon D. Lewis
381A Hornby Road
Corning, NY

...Reading your very poignant salute to George O'Hanlon in COMICS SCENE #15 truly moved me. With all the man had to endure in the last few years of his life, he fought a greater fight than any fireman or policeman. It's good to know Hanna-Barbera Productions was here to make George O'Hanlon and his counterpart feel wanted.

May we always remember the man who saw the future in the eyes of a 21st century man had a 20th century golden heart. Thank you so much.

Steven Acevedo
Bronx, NY

...I really enjoyed the June Foray interview in COMICS SCENE #13. It was fun to hear about the days when *Bullwinkle* was being made, and I hope COMICS SCENE can do more such articles with the great vocal talents and animation geniuses of our day. It's sad, though, that so many of them are gone now. They really will be missed. Changing the subject a bit, I hope you can do an article on *The Disney Afternoon* with some interviews with the people behind the scenes. I would really like to hear about who originated the concepts of the new shows, and if they plan to have new episodes done for each series each year (like regular TV shows). I do realize each episode is expensive to produce, but I keep on wanting more. I also hope you can do an interview with Paul Winchell, who does the voice of Tigger and Zummi Gummi (on *Gummi Bears*). He has been contributing to the animation industry for more than 30 years , so he must have a few great stories to share.

James Smith III
1615 Main
Williston, ND 58801

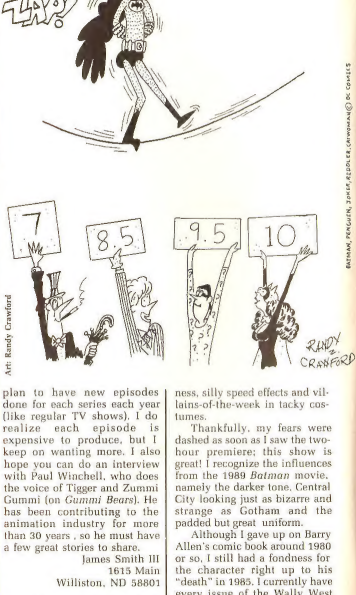
...I wish to share a few of my thoughts on the latest attempt by network television to put a superhero on the air in an ongoing series. Naturally, I'm referring to CBS' excellent version of DC Comics' *The Flash*.

When I first heard about this show, I admit that I feared something similar to the 1960s' *Batman* program would get on the air. I expected to see campiness, silly speed effects and villains-of-the-week in tacky costumes.

Thankfully, my fears were dashed as soon as I saw the two-hour premiere; this show is great! I recognize the influences from the 1989 *Batman* movie, namely the darker tone, Central City looking just as bizarre and strange as Gotham and the padded but great uniform.

Although I gave up on Barry Allen's comic book around 1980 or so, I still had a fondness for the character right up to his "death" in 1985. I currently have every issue of the Wally West version, so I *have* kept in touch with the Flash lore.

John Wesley Shipp plays a terrific and believable Barry Allen, full of the nobility and decency that made him such a great character in the comics. His character isn't a man with a mission, he seems to be a man with a remarkable gift and the means to use it for his city, and I applaud this motivation because



Art: Randy Crawford

BATMAN, PENGUIN, JOKER, RIDDLER, CATWOMAN © DC COMICS

revenge-driven vigilantes get pretty darn boring after a while.

Now, about this tampering with a legend business; personally it doesn't bother me. I mean, the comics will always exist and television is certainly a different medium. changes would *have* to be made. I like the idea of giving Allen the problems of Wally West, like the need to eat and sleep a great deal. They work for the character.

I was thrilled beyond words when I found the names of the story editors for this program. Howard Chaykin has been a favorite of mine for a long time and John Moore is a talented writer.

I'll be a viewer of this show as long as it is able to stay on the air, but when will we get to see some reworked versions of Flash villains? I would love to see the Pied Piper, Captain Cold and his lethal sister, Mirror Master and the Reverse-Flash, just for starters. The shows have been great so far, but don't ignore the bad guys who made the character popular in the first place.

My hopes remain high for *The Flash* and I hope the standards set remain as they are. The speed effects are wonderful. I really get the feeling that this man is moving that fast. I love the red blur, kind of reminded me of Carmine Infantino's days as the Flash artist. Keep it coming, guys, you've got a good show here.

Dennis Kininger
1307 Utica Street
Oriskany, NY 13424

...Ever since I heard about the 1966 *Dick Tracy* pilot, I've always wanted to see it. I still haven't seen it, but I've got the next best thing...a great article with great photos in issue #16. Recently, when *Filmfax* did a two-part article on Dick Tracy's celluloid appearances, though they mentioned his run-in with Mr. Memory in '66, they didn't print any stills from the pilot. By the way, in the article, it was mentioned that Greenway sought the rights to Green Hornet, Wonder Woman, Superman and Dick Tracy. Obviously, they got the rights to the Hornet and Tracy, but what about the Amazon Princess and the Man of Steel? Are they responsible for a *Wonder Woman* pilot from the late '60s that I've heard about?

Liked the article on the ill-fated *Brenda Starr* film. I hope it finally gets released, whether on the big screen or video. I've been dying to see it. That picture of Tim Dalton on page 61 was pretty interesting. As Basil St. John, he's sporting a forelock over his right eye, something he *should* sport when playing 007 since, in the books, Bond also has one.

Delmo (The Saint) Walters Jr.
1299 Grand Concourse
Bronx, NY 10452

Our TV pilot expert is unaware of a late '60s Wonder Woman *pilot. There was a 1974* WW *TV movie pilot (with Cathy Lee Crosby) though—which led to a second pilot (and the Lynda Carter series).*

...I liked the comments made in the editorial of issue #16 about how when the still photos for a comic-based movie look good, the movie usually isn't. On the other hand, the still photos from *The Flash* were absolutely awful, but the show is excellent. I should be more clear; the photos weren't bad, but the Flash suit is. It works perfectly for the show, but when seen as a still, it looks *ridiculous*.

When is Marvel going to show a bit of backbone and quit letting third-rate studios make third-rate productions of their (supposedly) first-rate characters? New World does *The Punisher*, and despite "executive" creative decisions designed to make the movie more appealing to the mainstream instead of the lowly "comic book movie fan," it still never made it to the theaters and will be a video release. That in itself says something about the film's quality. How many good movies ever go straight-to-video? Next, something called 21st Century has made *Captain America*, and it, too, is straight-to-video. Not every movie has to be a big-budget, star-studded, $40 million dollar spectacular like *Batman*, but can't Stan Lee (who is supposed to be co-executive producer of these things) realize that *every* bad production based on his comics puts a curse on every future production? Who in the world can possibly expect the upcoming (maybe) *Spider-Man* film to be any good? The only thing worse than no superhero films are *bad* superhero films.

Also, I have a problem with the fan-boys out there who keep berating Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird for "selling out." The original *Turtles* series is still there; read it. Don't watch the cartoon. I don't care for the cartoon myself. It's for kids. All the changes were made for marketing purposes, and in this case, they were good ones. I don't consider different-colored headbands a "raping" of the heroes' (or creators') integrity.

On the other hand, I consider a *Spider-Man-Captain America* arena show a serious raping of the company's integrity. It's a ludicrous idea, and I can't even bring myself to dignify it by commenting much. I'm not impressed with the touring Rock 'n' Roll Turtles either, but I wonder if E & L had much say over that. Even so, look at it financially. Turtles are hot. Would you turn down more free money from your hot creation? Spider-Man and Cap are cold right now; this monstrosity will make them colder.

A final note to the guy in the letter column who bellyached about how he couldn't sell any of his creations to the comic industry, and was whining to the magazine for help. Buddy, the good and the determined will make it. If you've submitted as much as you say, you're determined. Maybe you aren't any good. It takes guts to realize that.

Keep up the good work. I buy this book to keep up on comic movie news, and you're the best at it.

Robert O'Keefe
Ontario, Canada

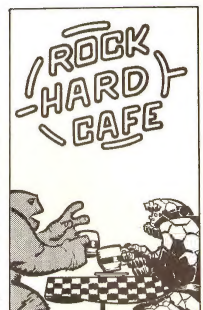
...In response to Chris Claremont's question in issue #17 of who could take over *X-Men* when he's gone, I pick John Byrne (if he didn't quit after doing 10 issues).

I think the comment animator/director Ken Boyer made about Disney and Warner Bros. is not true, at least not as he stated. Warner Bros. has *not* greatly surpassed Disney in quality; it's just that Disney is so plot-driven that they're not as wacky as Warner Bros. In a Warner Bros. cartoon, a piano can fall on someone and it's used as a joke, but in a Disney cartoon, it would be used as danger. Nobody's ever in danger in Warner Bros. cartoons, it's *all* a joke.

One more thing: Is everyone who's working on *Tiny Toons* from *Mighty Mouse*?

Darryl Peake
Address Withheld

Well, not quite everyone. Still, the best talent does tend to end up at some of the same places.



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Ready for Launch

By WILL MURRAY

It has been almost a decade since Dave Stevens embarked on the creative odyssey that began with a modest back-of-the-book comic strip to helping to produce the Disney film version of that no longer modest character, the Rocketeer. He could hardly have dreamed back then that what originally started out as a two-part feature, totaling 12 pages, would become the springboard to what is being touted as one of the most expensive action pictures of summer 1991.

Coincidentally enough, it all began in the summer of 1981, when Pacific Comics publisher Steve Schanes asked Stevens, whose previous comic book work had been largely confined to ghost-inking Russ Manning's classic *Tarzan* comic strip and some underground comics work, to fill out some blank pages in the back of *Starslayer.*

"I was kind of curious as to what I could do," Stevens recalls. "I really hadn't tested myself at it before. It was really an experiment on my part. It sounded like it might be fun. So, I sat down and did a visual that had been knocking around in my head for a few months without any intention of doing anything with it. I came up with the image they used in that teaser ad in the back of *Starslayer* #2. I wrote the thing around that drawing."

Originally, since Stevens was enjoying a lucrative career as a commercial artist and storyboarder—*Raiders of the Lost Ark* was one of his early assignments—those two stories were supposed to be the end of the Rocketeer.

Then, the mail poured in. Comics fans fell in love with Stevens' lush retro-Frank Frazetta/Al Williamson/Reed Crandall/Lou Fine style of rendering. They thrilled to the strip's '30s aviation background, the homages to that era's pulp and movie serial heroes, and to pinup girls of the '50s. They embraced Cliff Secord, the hapless hero who comes into possession of a prototype rocket pack and uses it to impress his girl friend, as a refreshing change from the tired superhero formula. They wanted more.

"I wasn't all that anxious to get committed to a comic," Stevens says now. "But I jumped in anyway."

He did three more installments for *Pacific Presents,* before finishing out the story in a *Rocketeer* one-shot.

With an air of an old matinee idol, newcomer Bill Campbell brings Cliff Secord, the Rocketeer, to life.

With "The Rocketeer" fueled, creator Dave Stevens begins the film's countdown.

Photos: Ron Batzdorff

"As long as a lot of the charm that was in the comic is in the film, I'll be happy," says Dave Stevens, contrasting the comic's page with the Hollywood reality.

Readers clamored for even more. A trade paperback edition appeared in 1984 from Eclipse, collecting the entire saga. Then, in 1988, the Rocketeer was reborn in Comico's *The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine*. Simultaneously, pre-production began on the film.

It has been a long, rocky road, which really began in 1985 when scriptwriters Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo first approached Stevens about bringing the Rocketeer to the screen, on through various options, to Disney's entering the picture (see CS #2). Along the way, there were lawsuits (with Marvel Comics over ownership of the Rocketeer name) and many production delays. Now, Stevens finds himself squarely in the pilot's cockpit—where he belongs.

Of course, it's unusual by Hollywood standards for a creator to even wrangle a set pass to the film adaptation of his character. But Dave Stevens managed to land the responsibility of being associate producer.

"It's part of my deal," Stevens explains. "I wanted to be as physically involved as I could be. My main concern is that the characters are handled well. As long as a lot of the charm that was in the comic is in the film, I'll be happy."

Stevens sees his role as helpful resource and not overseer or continuity cop. From time to time, as might be expected given his background, he has also pitched in as a storyboarder and set artist.

"I boarded a teaser sequence, which at this point, I don't know whether we're going to see or not," he reveals. "I did a piece of art for Howard Hughes' office. And they let me do the Rocketeer helmet, which I'm still amazed at. They let me bring in my own sculptor and we worked on it for maybe three weeks until we had a pristine helmet that looked like the comics version. I didn't expect that kind of cooperation."

The classic retro-'30s helmet will be virtually identical to Stevens' original composition.

"It does look a *little* different," he admits. "It's broader. That's because when I draw the helmet on a human figure in two dimensions, I cheat on the size. The size of the helmet is human skull size. Of course, that's too small once you actually put it over a human head."

Stevens has long been on record as preferring an unknown actor in the lead role. In Bill Campbell, he has something quite close to that, as well as someone whose physical proportions help keep the oversized helmet in perspective.

"Bill used to be a regular on *Crime Story*," Stevens explains. "He played Joey, the tall kid. But with longer hair, cut in the '30s Cliff Secord style, he looks *exactly* like the character. It's really amazing. And the good thing about him being so tall—he's six foot three—is that the helmet looks smaller on him. He has a real commanding attitude when he has that thing on."

Great care is being taken to give the Rocketeer flying sequences a rough-and-ready Saturday matinee serial feel.

"No ballet, no floating through the sky," Stevens vows, alluding to the *Superman* style of cinematic flying. "It's a combination of wire and effects. ILM is going to be working overtime."

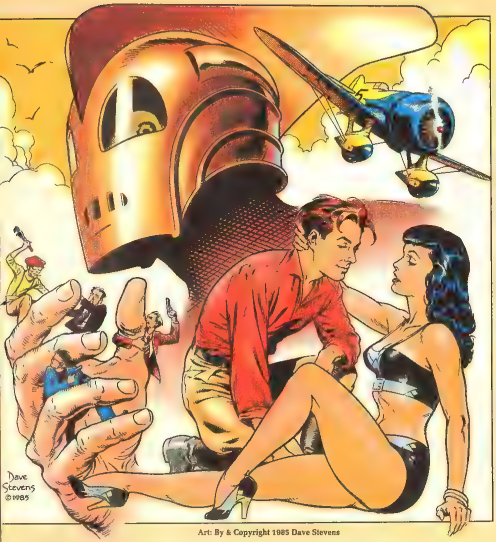
If Rocketeer fans can expect to see the definitive Cliff Secord flashing across the silver screen, they shouldn't get their hopes up for the quintessential Betty, whom many have seen as an idealized version of legendary 1950s pinup queen, Betty Page.

"That character went through *many* changes," Stevens relates. "For legal reasons, they decided to call her Jenny, and not allude to any living or dead

Notes Stevens of actor Bill Campbell. "He looks *exactly* like the character."

Art: Dave Stevens

Rocketeer Film Photo & Art: Copyright 1991 Walt Disney Pictures



Art: By & Copyright 1985 Dave Stevens

person. There's not as much of the cheesecake aspect in the character as there was. But she *is* an aspiring actress. The gal who's playing her is just perfect. Her name is Jennifer Connelly (of *Labyrinth*, STARLOG #108). She has great eyes and plays the part very well."

An assortment of actors take on the roles of familiar Rocketeer cast members. Terry (*The Stepfather*) O'Quinn plays Howard Hughes. Paul Sorvino is nightclub owner Eddie Valentine. Eddie Jones has been cast as the down-and-out barnstormer, Malcolm.

A new character is Neville Sinclair, an Errol Flynn-style actor played by the current James Bond, Timothy Dalton (STARLOG #145).

"He's basically your 1930s British Hollywood matinee idol," says Stevens. "He's very effete. Lives in a great big mansion and the whole bit. He's a real interesting character."

Peevy, Cliff's mechanic and mentor, is essayed by Alan Arkin. Thought was given to casting the character's real-life model, *Jonny Quest* creator Doug Wildey, as Peevy back in the project's earliest stages, Stevens recalls. But once *The Rocketeer* became a big-budget film, such tongue-in-cheek indulgences fell victim to the demands of name casting.

But what has been gained, Stevens believes, more than makes up for such sacrifices. For instance, Cliff's classic racing plane, the Blind Bulldog, will appear exactly as in the strip.

"I'm seeing things being realized in three dimensions that *never* would have happened otherwise," he points out. "They built an autogyro, from scratch. They built Chaplin Field, with hangars and grandstands. They built a huge Bendix pylon for these racers to fly around. It *wasn't* done optically. We have racing planes from the 1930s going around these pylons. We got a hold of the real Gee Bee—the one that flies. That was awesome. Basically, we put on an air show!"

And what would a 1930s aviation film be without an airship?

"Before you make any comparison to *Indiana Jones III*," he promises, "it's better, it's bigger, and it looks like the real thing. It *looks* like the *Graf Zeppelin*. The gondola we have built on this stage, everything about it looks *exactly* as it should. And the things that go on visually in and on the zeppelin are pretty amazing. It's new information. It's stuff you haven't seen before. There are some hairy fight scenes having to do with the zeppelin."

The film will try to capture the flavor of the comic and the era, but Cliff's girl friend has had her name changed and her charms toned down.

In addition to the soundstage gondola, a full-size sectional mock-up of the *Graf Zeppelin* was constructed on an outdoor location for a wild top-of-the-gasbag slugfest.

"It's really impressive," Stevens jokes, "especially for people driving down the highway and seeing this gigantic tail section with a big red swastika. Who knows what they thought as they were driving by?"

No stranger to film sets, Stevens admits that being on the set every day for months on end can get arduous, even if it is *his* character being brought to life before his very eyes.

"It's an energetic shoot," he says. "There has been a lot of location stuff and night shooting. Last night was in Howard Hughes' offices where Hughes and the G-men are confronting Cliff about the rocket pack, basically saying, 'Give it back.' And he's saying, 'I can't. I need it for one more thing.' It's a dash for freedom from the office. He makes a really unusual exit. I don't want to give it away, because it's a *big* surprise."

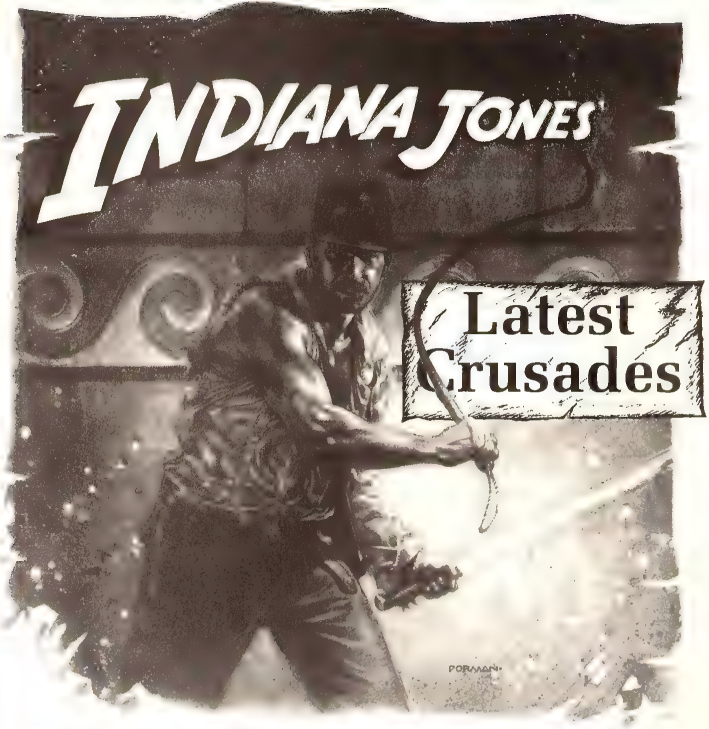
The storyline follows the original Rocketeer serial, and includes material from the recent Comico installments—one was co-written by Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo—deviating only for certain necessary liberties.

"When we did the first draft five years ago," Stevens explains, "Danny, Bill and I sifted through everything I had, and took what we could that we thought would work cinematically. I put in a few things that I had in notes that I never had put in the comic. And some other things. Through various drafts, it has gone through some changes."

Altogether, two drafts were executed, and were rewritten a half-dozen times. Just before going to camera, the original director, Bill (*Harry and the Hendersons*) Dear, had to bow out and Joe (*Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*) Johnston replaced him, requiring further changes in the approach. Ultimately, they returned to basics.

"What we ended up doing was going back to the first draft and reworking that," Stevens recalls. "At one point, another writer did come in and do a draft entirely on his own. Then, Danny and Paul went over that, inserting things that Joe Johnston wanted to put back in from the early drafts. Basically, the cast of characters

(continued on page 21)



Cover Art: Dave Dorman

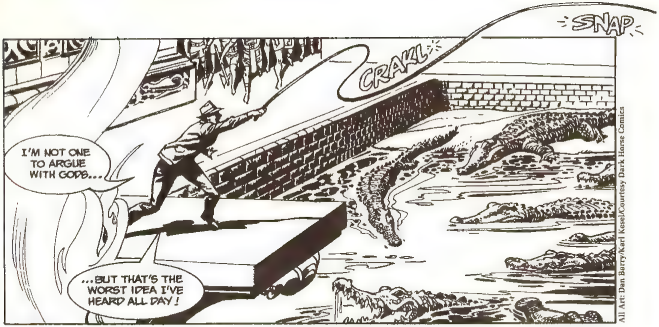
Adventure has the same old name—and new digs at Dark Horse Comics.

By MICHAEL McAVENNIE

As George Lucas and Steven Spielberg did with three blockbuster movies in the '80s, writer William Messner-Loebs and comics veteran Dan Barry are now giving adventure a familiar name in *Indiana Jones and the Keys to Atlantis*, the first four-part installment of Dark Horse Comics' new Indy series. The book's format is similar to that of DC Comics' *Legends of the Dark Knight*, in which each storyline is broken down into four or five issues. Each four-chapter installment of *Indiana Jones*, however, will appear under a different title (like Dark Horse's *ALIENS* series).

"I think it was done this way to give everyone a little more flexibility," explains Messner-Loebs, whose other writing credits include *The Flash*, *Johnny Quest*, *Journey* and the *Batman* newspaper strip. "I'm writing quite a few different things right now, and Dan is in the same position, so I think the people at Dark Horse wanted to give themselves a certain amount of flexibility in trying out different creative staffs and material, as well as to have a different feeling for each *Indy* series."

According to both Messner-Loebs and Barry, each man took on the project out of an appreciation for the Indiana Jones character. "*Raiders of the Lost Ark* is one of my all-time favorite films, right along with *Robin Hood*," Messner-Loebs claims. "I've seen the movie 50, maybe 60 times, and I just never get tired of it. Also, I was actually going to be an archaeologist when I was a kid, right up to the



All Art This Story Used Courtesy Dark Horse Comics

point where I got to college and realized that at some point, you *had* to learn geology. It turned out that I couldn't, so I became a history major instead, and the world lost the next Seven Cities of Troy," he laughs.

"I've loved every moment of this project," remarks Barry, a 40-year icon in the comics industry whose numerous credits include the *Flash Gordon* and *Spider-Man* syndicated strips, as well as *Spy Smasher*, *Airboy*, *Crime Does Not Pay*, and more recently, Continuity Comics' *Toyboy* and *Ms. Mystic*. "I love the Indiana Jones concept, since it fits my style of storytelling and artwork exactly. I've always had a lot of ironic, sardonic humor in my stuff, a lot of tongue-in-cheek action. That's exactly what *Indiana Jones* is all about.

"When Lucas and Spielberg created the character, they did it as a take-off

The plot of *Indiana Jones and the Keys to Atlantis* came from a discarded idea for a film transformed into an interactive computer game, so it already presented perils for the writer and artist.

on both the old 1930s Saturday serials and my generation's comic strips. Indiana Jones is a take-off of the kind of stuff I've been doing since the '50s. If 20 years from now, somebody asked you to do a take-off on what was once a popular TV thing and had long since passed, you would find it a terrific amount of fun to do. That's what makes *Indiana Jones* a terrific challenge for me."

In addition to a tongue-in-cheek aspect, Barry relates to Jones' adventurous side. "I've spent much of my life traveling," he explains. "I've been a skin diver and mountain climber, and I've climbed some of the toughest mountains in Europe, so I've done many of the things Indiana Jones does. I've lived that kind of life, and I think it reflects in the series. Almost all of these things have come from personal experience, and that adds something. So, when I had to draw Indiana Jones climbing down into a crater pit, I didn't need slides; I've lived it. Most guys draw people climbing a mountain all wrong. They have them leaning in and grabbing the mountain. If you do that, you'll fall right down. The way to climb a mountain is to lean right out into the void, so your feet have a grip. I also used to do a great deal of horseback riding, so when I sit a guy on a horse, I *know* what it should look like. These are subtle nuances; the reader doesn't know why a thing looks right, but it looks right. Having done it, you enjoy drawing it, even if you don't get it exactly the way you set out to do it. You enjoy the challenge."

This new adventure introduces a woman from Indy's past, who remembers him well.

Indiana Jones Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 LucasFilm Ltd.

Nazis. Indy hates those guys, especially when they attempt to steal a stone idol from his first expedition.

Indiana Jones and the Keys to Atlantis was originally planned as a movie before Lucasfilm decided to use the plot in an interactive computer game due out later this year. "The storyline to the game was only halfway finished when we started the book," Messner-Loebs says, "so Lucasfilm and Dark Horse have been pretty much working together. There's a great deal of puzzle-solving and mazes that we've worked into the narrative.

"The story takes place with Jones teaching at Barnett College when a stranger comes up to him and asks him to identify a stone idol. Something about the stone strikes Jones as familiar, and he discovers that it's one of several pieces from an earlier expedition he went on in Iceland. The stranger turns out to be a Nazi. He takes the idol away from Jones, and the chase is on.

"Jones' co-star in the series is Sophia Hapgood, who was also on the expedition and had a falling-out with Jones. She has since been posing as a mystic," Messner-Loebs continues. "It turns out that she has some sort of 'psychic' link to Atlantis, so both she and Jones have to find Atlantis and its source of power before the Nazis do."

Indiana Jones and the Keys to Atlantis takes a brief but important look into Indy's past, a trend that Messner-Loebs feels will continue in upcoming storylines. "It's interesting to see something about Indy's past," he says. "In this story, we find out about his first archaeological dig in 1929, and Sophia Hapgood is the earliest person we know about in Indy's life as an adult.

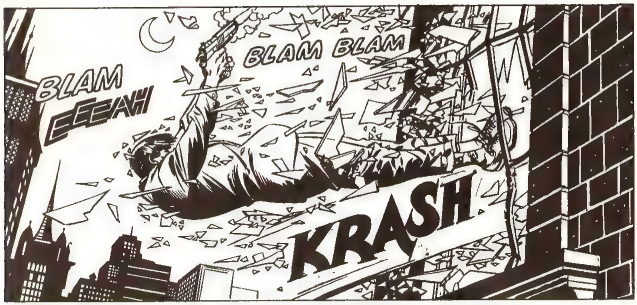
"The relationship between Indy and Sophia is an interesting one," he adds. "It's more of a genuine friendship than a romance. There's not very much of that in fiction today, whereas there's quite a bit of that in life."

The creative team will be keeping the cliffhangers to a minimum, so as to not dilute their impact.

With the exception of museum curator Marcus Brody, no other characters from the movies will appear in *Indiana Jones and the Keys to Atlantis*. According to Messner-Loebs, it was Lucasfilm's decision not to include popular supporting characters such as Marion Ravenwood, Sallah and Short Round. "Our input to the narrative was somewhat limited due to the game's nature. There's enough in the game itself that they wanted to have included, but there really wasn't any room to put in many other aspects. Indy goes through nine countries in his pursuit of Atlantis, so keeping him going and that little dotted line on the map moving was a sufficient enough challenge."

"Unfortunately, Bill was saddled with having to deal with the game people," Barry confirms, "so there were limitations in the amount of action we could get into the story. I don't want that to sound negative. It was understandable, since what went into the story is based on Lucasfilm's game, which they were still in the process of designing. They couldn't supply us with references, so what they did instead was tell us, 'Describe what's going to happen, and describe some of the gimmicks, relics and artifacts that appear in the story.' I would draw them as best I could, and if they were off-base, they would come back with a concrete correction."

In addition to drawing the series, Barry assisted Messner-Loebs with plot and dialogue. "Because of my



Dark Horse hopes to triumph where the other comics company failed by capturing those unique quiet moments in Indy's life in between the action.

background of having written my own stuff, [Dark Horse publisher] Mike Richardson allowed me to do the final writing on dialogue," he says. "The legend of Atlantis is something I've always been interested in, and, by coincidence, have done a lot of research on. I know many people who, like some of the characters in this series, take the legend very seriously, so I'm very familiar with it."

Successfully translating the adventures of Indiana Jones onto the four-color page may not have been as enjoyable a challenge for the creative team. After all, Marvel Comics had previously published *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones*, as well as several movie adaptations, but with nowhere near the success of the three films.

"One problem with a project like *Indiana Jones* is that many of the things you like in an adventure film, like the fleeting expression that passes across an actor's face, are the sort of things comics don't do terribly well," Messner-Loebs says. "Those fleeting expressions take up panels, so you have to go about building reader identification in a different way. One advantage a comic has over a movie, however, is that we never know what Indy is thinking in the movie. In a comic book, it's very easy and almost impossible at some point *not* to know what he thinks.

"I've wrestled with this in my mind, and I've never fully come to a conclusion about how well an adventure comic really works. If you're going to do something like *Indiana Jones* long-term, you have to really be willing to restructure it, and that's where you usually get into a problem: When you start restructuring, exactly how much do you restructure before it doesn't bear *any* resemblance to what you're supposed to be licensing? It's very hard for me to picture any licensee letting you do that to their characters. So, something that always limits you when you're working with a company is that you basically must take the character that's there.

"Fortunately, by the very nature of the three movies, Indy has much more flexibility than most adventure characters. We've seen him in many different roles already, and it seems to me that you can play off of that. I would like to see him in a story where he was simply in Barnett College all the time, or a story that didn't have a supernatural core to it. It would also be nice to have him actually discover something he doesn't have to blow up at the end. It still has yet to be determined as to how hard it's going to be working with the character, now that we've gotten started, and now that we're going to be producing our own ideas and storylines."

One aspect Messner-Loebs wanted to explore was Indy's role as a teacher, so he brought several students into the story as supporting characters. "I think the idea that he might have a motivation as a teacher as well as an adventurer was one of the biggest innovations I was able to introduce into this story," he says. "The rest, however, is basically the quest for Atlantis. There are hot-air balloons, submarines, underwater cities, explosions, bullets flying everywhere and big libraries. It's a mixture of both insight and action."

While Messner-Loebs sees it as a "mixture," Barry feels the two elements should be working off each other more naturally. "There's no conflict between action and insight," he states. "This is something I've learned from three decades of studying the best writers around, and you can't pick better models for clear continuity and characterization based on action than [*Terry and the Pirates*' Milton] Canniff and Will Eisner. The character *evolves* in the action. I mean, look at the characterization that went into Indy with the humanity of his fear of snakes. The character heightens the action; you don't have to stop and slow the action down to do 'characterization.' "

Both Messner-Loebs and Barry are confident that Dark Horse's *Indiana Jones* series will succeed where Marvel Comics' version failed. "My feeling was that Marvel got the adventure part right in their book," Messner-Loeb cites, "but they didn't really have the sense of him being an archaeologist or a sense of the more quiet moments. Some of the things people remember most about *Raiders* are the quiet moments, like the night Indy wanders around the dig with his men singing, or when he's just walking down the street with the monkey. All of those elements are as important as him being pulled into quicksand. It gives you a feeling of reality."

According to Barry, "The genius of the *Indiana Jones* series is that it tells an impossible, improbable story and makes it totally believable. That's something I've been doing for 35 years on *Flash Gordon*. Someone once said to me the difference between my *Flash Gordon* and Alex Raymond's was that I brought Flash a little bit back down to Earth and made him a little more human. That has been my style and my strength in storywriting, and that's what *Indiana Jones* does. The character is fallible, he perspires and he's real, and that's my meat: realism."

ROBOT FIGHTER

Magnus, that '60s steel-handed hero, brings robot-smashing into the '90s.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

4001 A.D.

We're going to *work* with what's there. We're going to deepen it. We're going to embellish it. And we're *not* going to violate it," says Jim Shooter of Valiant Comics' new series, *Magnus, Robot Fighter*.

Based on the fan-favorite series published by Gold Key Comics in the 1960s, created by Russ Manning and Chase Craig and drawn by Manning, the new series will be written by Shooter, the former editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics and now head man at Valiant, pencilled by Art Nichols, best known for his stint on DC's *Justice League America*, and inked by Bob Layton of *Iron Man* fame.

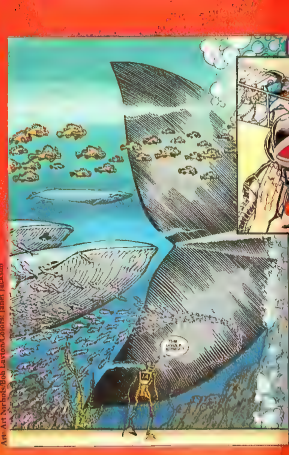
Magnus told the story of the nation of NorthAm in the year 4000, a society dependent on robots for nearly everything. Introduced into this world is Magnus, raised to believe that one can become *too* dependent on the machines. He's able to smash robots with his bare hands. And he's just in time, too—as a rash of mad robots and mad robot controllers have followed hard on his heels.

Valiant's version will pick up from where the Gold Key comics left off, and will feature a number of marketing innovations, including a set of trading cards (one per issue) featuring art by some of comics' best—Terry Austin, Stan Drake, Joe Kubert and Alan Weiss among them. There will also be a special issue #0, available only by redeeming the coupons in the regular title's first eight issues. That issue will feature a card drawn by Barry Windsor-Smith. A limited run of #0 will go to retailers—without the card.

"One of the things that always attracted me to *Magnus* was that it was a bright future," Shooter explains. "The knee-jerk reaction to everything these days is to do this post-apocalyptic storyline. It has become a cliché: *Everything* is post-apocalyptic, everything is rivers of blood and piles of bodies. I like the idea of the brighter future. I'm not, however, going to just

Art: Perin Cullins/Bob Layton/Colors: Janet Jackson

One thing that writer Jim Shooter stresses is that *Magnus, Robot Fighter* won't be another look at an apocalyptic future.



Art: Art Nichols & Jack Purcell; Color: Janet Jackson

accept this Pollyanna situation at face value. Are we going to preserve what Russ Manning left us? Yes. But we *are* going to explore further."

Shooter points out a few of the areas of Magnus' world that need to be examined more deeply. "We really don't know anything about how NorthAm works—we know it's a utopia, we know robots do all the work; there doesn't seem to be any shortage of food or energy—so what do these people *do* all day? We don't know what the rest of the world is like. There was one excursion to Nepal and we saw Antarctica—but we have a vision of the rest of the world that we'll explore.

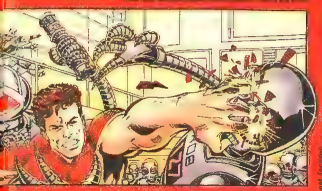
"We figure there's NorthAm, ChinAsia, EuRussia—the world is broken into large masses that are all fairly friendly," the writer goes on. "But there's one place that still stands alone—Japan. As you approach Japan from across the Pacific, it rises like a pillar. The entire land mass has been built up into this five-mile-high shaft rising out of the sea. You don't land on Japan, you go *into* it. The whole place is one big circuit board; you don't build a building, you plug one in. People live inside Japan; Japanese people have never seen the sun because the place is one big honeycomb. We'll eventually introduce a character who's sort of a Japanese equivalent of Magnus; the whole structure of Japan is like a robot, and he's on the inside fighting, in the way that Magnus is fighting outside."

But more than geography, Shooter and his art team intend to look into unfulfilled story ideas of this world Russ Manning created some 25 years ago.

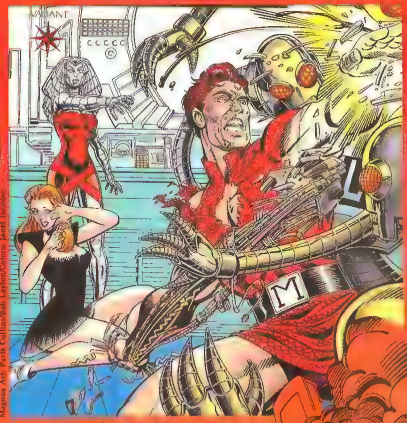
"We thought about it—and things that sound funny as I'm telling it become opportunities for stories. I don't mean we're going to go back and explain everything that was an apparent glitch in the old *Magnus* stories. I mean that they've left us many powerful things to explore. There's a line just tossed off in one story: Magnus' robot mentor, 1-A, says that before he trained Magnus, he experimented with using a molecular rearranger to augment normal humans with superpowers, but that didn't work; they all went crazy. 'You did *what*? We have all these altered humans running around who are all insane? Tell me more about that.' Russ Manning might well have done that as he assumed more influence over the series; he was already starting on more dramatic directions and picking up on many of the dropped balls. I like to think we're doing what Russ would have done if he had been around."

The criminal justice system of this "perfect society" also offers fertile ground for stories, says Shooter. "If you're a criminal, they send you to be psycho-probed. That sounds a little intense. What is the price of utopia? It has some fascist overtones: If you're a convicted criminal, they go in and wipe your mind. I used to wonder, 'If there's a utopia, and everybody is prosperous, why is there crime in the first place? Why are there all these people scurrying around like little rodents at the bases of these buildings?' The answer is: They don't want to get psycho-probed. You've got the classic situation of Magnus and his buddies upstairs referring to these people as misfits, outcasts and petty criminals, people who have fled the light. That's probably true; they probably are all those things. On the other hand, I don't think they were fleeing the wonderful environment so much as they were trying not to be psycho-probed. There is some *Clockwork Orange* going on here.

"Am I going to explore that?" Shooter asks. "Certainly I am. Am I going to use that to make this into a fascist hell? No, I'm going to do what I assume a good writer should do, which is explore all that and deal



What Art Nichols will be doing is using Manning's designs of the future as a foundation to build upon.

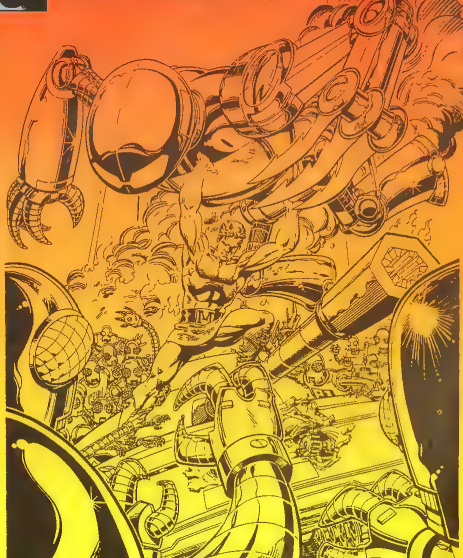


Magnus, Art: Paris Cullins/Bob Layton/Colors: Janet Jackson

Magnus' girl friend Leeja won't be turning into a "gun-toting mama" overnight—Shooter plans to explore why she's a wimp.

with it. Use it as any writer would use the environment to act upon his characters."

But a comic book, if it's any good, is more than just plots, it's the people involved in those plots. And so, Shooter explains he will take the somewhat cardboard characters of the '60s and move them into the '90s with an eye toward evolution, not revolution. "Look at Magnus' girl friend, Leeja. Issue after issue, she would ignore Magnus' instructions and warnings, get herself into trouble, and then lie on the floor and cringe while he battled the robots, or be held as a hostage while he beat up the robots," he recalls. "There are certain writers in this industry who would just ignore all that and make her into this macho, gun-toting mama. Leeja as previously written wouldn't be acceptable to them, so they would remake her in an instant into some kind of tough broad. I don't work that way. I'm inheriting the Leeja I was left, and the Leeja I was left is a wimp. Am I going to do something about that? Oh yeah, but I'm not going to do it in the arbitrary, heavy-handed, sweeping revisionist style. I'm going to ask, 'What kind of woman would be that way? What would happen if you put a woman like that under this or that



The first eight issues carry coupons that can be redeemed for a free copy of a special *Magnus, Robot Fighter* #0.

kind of stress? What would happen in a particular environment?' Look for her to grow up a little. I prefer for characters to grow rather than just make sweeping changes.

"Same deal with Magnus. Some folks have said, 'Magnus should be this hard-ass type.' No, he shouldn't," Shooter continues. "He's the nicest guy in the world—*read the books*. If we want to toughen him up or wise him up, you'll see it on panel. Others have said, 'Senator Clane (Leeja's father) should be this awful, evil, conniving politician.' Nah, I don't think so...or at least, not in an instant. We haven't seen enough of Senator Clane to know his character real well, but so far, I haven't seen him be a cackling madman, and he's not going to be one on page two of the first story. We'll learn more about him. You may like him, you may not, but he's not going to suddenly go through some kind of mutation between issues. That doesn't work for me."

Art: Paris Cullins/Bob Layton/Gaines-Janet Jackson

Says Shooter of Magnus, "He's the nicest guy in the world."

What does work for Shooter is the clean, bright world that Russ Manning designed for *Magnus*, and he wants to see that look continue in the hands of the new art team. That being the case, he gave very specific instructions to Art Nichols.

" 'I don't care about your style. Your style is your own. Draw the way you draw'," Shooter said to the artist. " 'But I do care that you draw the buildings that Russ drew, that you draw the robots that Russ drew.'

"If you get Paul Gulacy, Howard Chaykin and Bill Sienkiewicz together and say, 'Draw the Empire State Building,' each of them should give you something that you recognize as the Empire State Building," Shooter explains. "Sienkiewicz's would probably be 15 miles high, but you would pick up the shape. But each would look tremendously different as well.

"That's all I ask. I like this future, this kind of '50s version of what life would be like in 4001. Let's draw that. Anything new we establish, Art will design, hopefully in the same motif. Anything that exists, he'll draw it just the way it was drawn before, but in his style. That way, we're honoring the design, maintaining the integrity of the future Russ Manning designed, but every artist isn't sitting there trying to draw like Russ Manning. That's the best way to proceed."

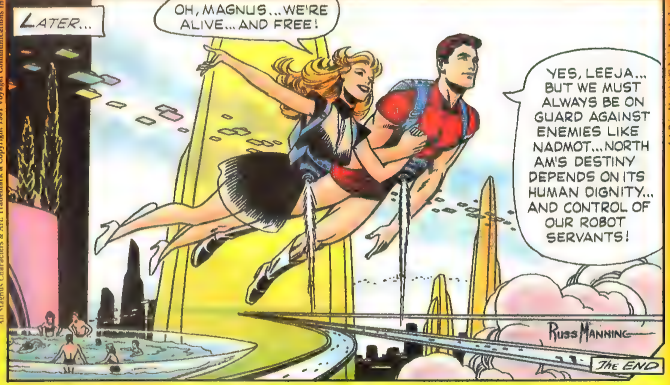
Art Nichols agrees. "There are several different ways to approach it: You can do an homage to the man's style and try to assimilate his style, copy it to maintain the same feel to the book," he remarks. "Or, as we're doing, you can take all of what Russ Manning did, what he drew and established in the series—this really great-looking futuristic world—keep that and his established designs of buildings, robots and clothing intact.

"I'm not Russ Manning. Very few people can come close to copying his style; I won't even try. We'll use Manning's designed world as a foundation to go forward, as opposed to getting mired down in something that would be too difficult to continue issue after issue. We'll pay homage in that we respect what he did."

But is it difficult to incorporate another artist's designs into your own work? Nichols says it's a question of looking at the project in a certain way. "You don't allow yourself to think about what you would do if you started from scratch. I have a completely different way of doing things, as would any other artist who worked on it. I read all of *Magnus* and began to think about the way Russ Manning approached these things. The robots were quite simple in their designs, but he worked out ways in which they differed depending on the job they did. It's almost like a philosophy, and

(continued on page 66)

"I'm not Russ Manning," notes artist Art Nichols. "Very few people can come close to copying his style; I won't even try."


LATER...
OH, MAGNUS...WE'RE ALIVE...AND FREE!
YES, LEEJA... BUT WE MUST ALWAYS BE ON GUARD AGAINST ENEMIES LIKE NADMOT...NORTH AM'S DESTINY DEPENDS ON ITS HUMAN DIGNITY... AND CONTROL OF OUR ROBOT SERVANTS!
RUSS MANNING
THE END
All Magnus Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Voyager Communications, Inc.

Art: Russ Manning/Colors: Janet Jackson

Stevens

(continued from page 12)

is the same, right up to Malcolm's rescue. The story works out exactly the same. *Everything* is true to the comic."

Although initially thrown off guard by the late change in directors—Johnston came on board in January 1990 when Dear became unavailable—Stevens now feels it all worked out for the best.

"Joe has a designer background, and that really helps in the visualization," says Stevens. "He comes from Lucasfilm and ILM. He directed all the second unit stuff in *Always*. Joe is an airplane freak. So, I feel real good about the way things have turned out."

One obvious question is, will the *Rocketeer* film evoke the gorgeousness of the *Rocketeer* comics pages, with their lush coloring and exquisite eye for period detail?

"Every bit, if not more so," Stevens says. "That's the idea. We have a brilliant art department. The set dresser is the best in Hollywood. Linda DeSenna. She had her staff research everything and fill the frame with so much great period stuff in all the interiors that it's just amazing. It's all so perfect, so right, that nothing looks artificial or planted."

One small element that will definitely not be a '30s relic is Dave Stevens himself. He has a cameo role.

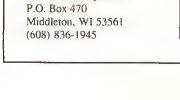
"As a matter of fact," he adds, "everyone in the crew who wanted to be in it, ended up in it. Everybody was having so much fun with the picture."

The Rocketeer will be Disney's big summer release and Stevens anticipates a tremendous amount of Rocketeer merchandising will follow in the film's wake. Everything from piggy banks to rocketpack salt-and-pepper shakers. The long-awaited third issue of *The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine* should appear from Dark Horse after the film debuts.

Alas, for fans of Dave Stevens the artist, that concluding installment may mark his swan song as the illustrator of Cliff Secord's adventures. But they will continue, he promises, under other artists in an all-new *Rocketeer* comic book currently being negotiated with a company he can't name until the contracts have been settled.

"I'll probably serve as an editor," he concludes. "I'll have something to do with the writing, if not write or plot them all myself. But the actual daily drudge of drawing panel after panel and noodling them and inking is just way, way too much work. I'm a single illustration guy, basically. My nature is completely contrary to doing comic books for a living. I've never looked at comics as a livelihood."

Celebrating 10 Years Of Success!



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—**James M. Talbot**, Everett, MA

If any other writer/artist had decided to tell the origin of Wolverine, it would be fair to suppose he was probably motivated by the two Rs of comics—recognition and royalties.

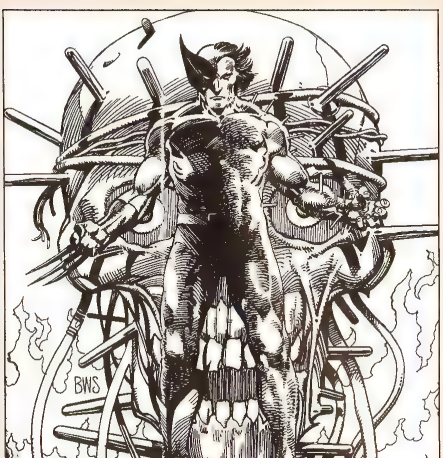
But Barry Windsor-Smith isn't just any other comics writer/artist. He's a legend in the field, the artist who first made Conan live in four color and then went on to more painterly pursuits through his own company, Gorblimey Press. Over the last decade, Windsor-Smith has continued to dabble in comics, producing a small body of work as diverse as "The Beguiling" for *Epic Illustrated*, a *Machine Man* mini-series and a pair of well-received *X-Men* fill-in issues. He obviously has his pick of projects.

So, why would Barry Windsor-Smith undertake what may turn into be his most ambitious project ever, the 13-part *Weapon X*?

"It came about in the oddest way," he explains. "Wolverine, or the character Logan, has more interest for me than Captain America or something like that. I can equate with that character better than some of the other characters in the Marvel Universe. He has these stupid spikes sticking out of his hands, but he doesn't fly. And he has a bit more character than the regular superhero type."

Weapon X didn't begin as a multi-part series.

"It was just an idea that occurred to me," the British-born artist relates. "I thought about doing a short story about Wolverine, just for something to do. How the hell *did* this guy get these



Secrets of Weapon

Brushing continuity aside, Barry Windsor-Smith reveals the naked truth about Wolverine.

funny spikes sticking out of his hands? So, I drew a couple of stories. I didn't bother telling anybody at Marvel. I just assumed they would want to publish it. I took them down to the editor of *Marvel Comics Presents*, Terry Kavanaugh."

Kavanaugh, with whom Windsor-Smith had worked on his "Lifedeath" *X-Men* fill-ins, had offered him a chance to do an eight-pager in the anthology title. The fact that Barry Windsor-Smith has for the last two years been working on Wolverine's origin has been one of Marvel's best-kept secrets.

"I think the truth is that nobody at Marvel thought I was going to *finish* it," Windsor-Smith chuckles, "so they didn't want to *say* anything! Terry was stunned when I called him up and said, 'Well, that's it. It's done. What next?' "

The prolonged period of time it took to draw the 112-page story now running in *Marvel Comics Presents*

By WILL MURRAY

produced an interesting result.

"Because it has taken so long to pull this off," Windsor-Smith relates, "my drawing style has changed quite a bit throughout the series. It's going to be strange seeing these things run together. Also, I did the stories out of sequence, which is rather bizarre. I didn't want to start on page one and end on 100 because then you know what's going to happen. That's kind of boring."

The storyline that evolved is deceptively uncomplicated, according to the writer/artist.

"It's the early '60s. Logan looks just the same then as he does now. I thought of drawing him younger, but, well, what the hell? Quite simply, he's abducted. But it's enigmatic. I don't want anybody to guess what's going to happen."

This is *not* going to be a typical Wolverine slashfest.

Appearances and name to the contrary, the Professor guiding these experiments on Weapon X is *not* Charles Xavier.

might be. This is the only thing about the series that really isn't mine."

In his enthusiasm for the *Weapon X* project, Windsor-Smith had inadvertently overlooked the writer who is most closely identified with the feral X-Man, and an accommodation had to be reached over the villain.

"I really wasn't thinking about Chris Claremont a whole lot," Windsor-Smith admits. "It didn't occur to me that he might have an idea about Logan's origin. I guess what was in the back of my mind was that if Chris *did* have an idea, he would have done it before now. I thought this was a clean avenue. So, when I took the first two stories down, Chris was a little upset. He didn't make that too apparent to me, but I've heard since that he was upset that I had encroached on his territory. Chris had a specific person whom he was going to, in the far-flung future, have tell the story of how Logan became Wolverine, and this person did it to him."

While that character's identity remains shrouded in secrecy, the villains we do see aren't the usual Marvel minions.

"There's one main boss," Windsor-Smith relates. "He's called the Professor, oddly enough. And he looks like bloody Professor X, which is weird. Nobody pointed this out to me! I had done 10 stories and I'm thinking, 'Who does this guy look like? He's sort of tall and he's bald and he wears glasses.' He looks just like Professor X!"

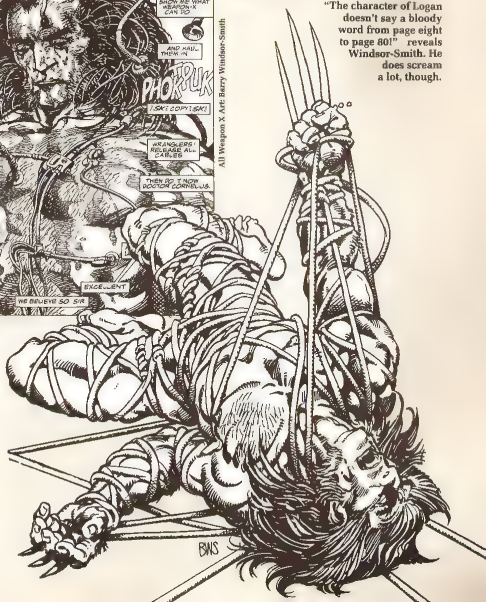
In case there are any lingering doubts, Windsor-Smith is quick to put them down.

Some fans may dislike Barry Windsor-Smith's decision to ignore the notion that Wolverine's adamantium skeleton was surgically implanted.

GOOD MORNING
GOOD MORNING PROFESSOR
GOOD MORNING SIR
HI NOS
CORNELIUS
SO IT IS RIGHT BE THE BIG DAY, EH?
WE'RE HOPING SO, SIR
GOOD!
GOOD!
DOCTOR CORNELIUS, WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR ME?
WELL, WE BELIEVE WE'VE OVERCOME THE SUPRA SUBCONSCIOUS ISLAND PROBLEM
HOW SO?
A SIMPLE TRABECULAR RATHER... IT WAS STARING US IN THE FACE ALL THE TIME
BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW, IT WORKS
EXCELLENT
WE BELIEVE SO SIR
WELL... DOCTOR SHOW ME WHAT WEAPON-X CAN DO
AND HAUL THEM IN
PHORUK
I CAN'T COPE! I CAN'T
WRANGLERS! WRANGLERS! ALL SCALES!
THEN GO TO IT NOW DOCTOR CORNELIUS

All Weapon X Art: Barry Windsor-Smith

"The character of Logan doesn't say a bloody word from page eight to page 80!" reveals Windsor-Smith. He does scream a lot, though.



"The character of Logan doesn't say a bloody word from page eight to page 80!" Windsor-Smith adds. "He's drugged all the time. He's being experimented on. He's virtually a flesh and blood robot. So, I created other characters to do the talking and keep the story running. Those were the characters that for me were the interesting part. Logan became an effigy in the story instead of a main player."

And about the villain...

"We never quite see who the main mover is in this series," Windsor-Smith explains. "There is another force at work. He's never seen, you never hear him. I never explain who he is. There are clues as to who it

"He's *not*," he says flatly. "It's total coincidence. And he doesn't have a name, like Professor Jones. He's just a very neurotic, amoral, manipulating son-of-a-bitch."

Other characters include the Professor's technical assistants on the mysterious Experiment X, Dr. Cornelius and Miss Hines. While the true character of Wolverine is not much on display in the story proper, new light is shed on Logan's past in a brief prelude sequence.

"It's apparent that in the early '60s, when Logan worked for some sort of Secret Service in Canada," Windsor-Smith reveals, "he was also using drugs and he was an alcoholic. His life was absolutely meaningless. He had been fired for a mistake at a firing range. It's kind of funny. He blows this guy's head off with a .38 revolver. And Logan's attitude is, 'I winged the guy. So what?' And the only reason he did that was because his hands were shaking because he had been drunk the night before.

"But this isn't spelled out," he adds. "This isn't Chris Claremont time where they've got all these explanatory thought balloons. If you don't pick it up from whatever action's on the page, you're *not* going to pick it up."

Originally, this series was to culminate with Wolverine's debut battling the Hulk.

Weapon X is basically a one-man show. Windsor-Smith wrote, drew, inked, colored and did the production work on the series.

"The storytelling is very conventional," he notes. "This isn't like *Plastic Forks* or *Stray Toasters*. It's just the way I normally do stuff. But the attitude is non-Marvel. I don't like that 'reveal everything' thing that Marvel has been dallying with for the last 25 years."

Although *Weapon X* pre-dates Wolverine's Marvel debut in *Incredible Hulk* #181, don't expect to see that particular version of Logan running through *Weapon X*.

"Originally, I did connect with that," Windsor-Smith admits, "because I was watching Herb Trimpe draw it in 1973. One of the ideas of how I was going to end *Weapon X* was Logan escaping and going out into the Yukon where the Hulk story took place. It was going to directly connect.

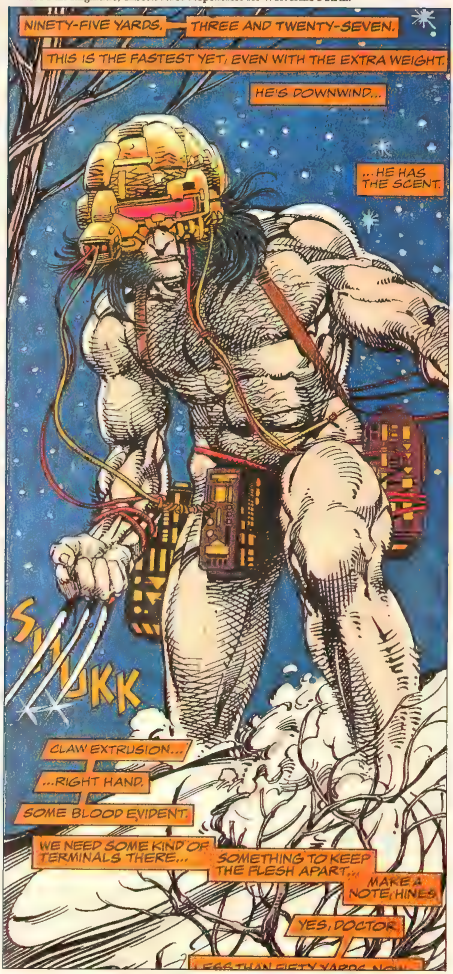
"The thing is," he continues, "he doesn't have that stupid costume on. In fact, Logan is *naked* throughout the series. It was tricky. At first, [Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Tom DeFalco was upset when he saw the first couple of stories. But I generally got away with it by deftly shadowing certain areas.

"There was one ridiculous panel—I don't know *what* I was thinking of—where Logan has just killed a bunch of animals. It was a test. And he stands up and he roars. And it's full-frontal nudity! I can't get away with *that*, so I kept etching it and crosshatching it, until it looked more and more like I was deliberately trying to cover this guy up! I tossed that around for about a year-and-a-half. At the very last moment, I was down at the office and I've got this stupid whiteout pen and I'm trying to make it look like he's wearing underpants, which is even *more* ridiculous!"

You might think that the opportunity to tell the origin of one of the most popular characters in current comics might weigh heavily on a creator's mind, but after a great deal of consideration, Barry Windsor-Smith opted to instinctively work his way through the critical origin sequence, ignoring past suggestions that Logan's adamantium claws were surgical implants.

"I don't choose to make this totally believable," he confesses. "The character's absurd to begin with. They've got him harnessed up with these power packs strapped to him, where they're trying to make a puppet out him. This is about as bloody scientific as the Hulk being zapped by gamma

There's an enigmatic, unseen force responsible for Wolverine's birth.


NINETY-FIVE YARDS, THREE AND TWENTY-SEVEN.
THIS IS THE FASTEST YET, EVEN WITH THE EXTRA WEIGHT.
HE'S DOWNWIND...
...HE HAS THE SCENT.
SHUKK
CLAW EXTRUSION...
...RIGHT HAND.
SOME BLOOD EVIDENT.
WE NEED SOME KIND OF TERMINALS THERE...
SOMETHING TO KEEP THE FLESH APART...
MAKE A NOTE, HINES.
YES, DOCTOR.
LESS THAN FIFTY YARDS NOW.

"This is about as bloody scientific as the Hulk being zapped by gamma rays!" admits Windsor-Smith.

rays! They drop him in this tank and there's this weird flashing and lights and all this mumbo jumbo. It's complete nonsense. When Logan comes out of the tank, as soon as he's threatened, these claws come of his hands, which is an astonishment to everyone. *Nobody* knew this was going to happen. Least of all Logan, obviously. That's when you start to get the idea that the Professor really *isn't* in charge."

Hewing to Marvel continuity is obviously not high on Windsor-Smith's agenda.

"If I had to do Marvel continuity, then I *wouldn't* be working for Marvel," he says with amiable unconcern. "I don't read those books, anyway. And I don't care whether Wolverine's claws are supposed to be metal or shiny. I just did it. My attitude is that if you don't like it, you can't have it."

Although Barry Windsor-Smith has drawn a pair of *X-Men* fill-in issues and an upcoming issue of *Excalibur*, which he dismisses as "bloody awful," he has no creative attachment to the series, despite having made his comics debut in the old *X-Men*, drawing in a pseudo-Jack Kirby style light years away from his subsequent work.

"Don't mention it!" he jokes when his early career is raised. "I used to cringe. Back in the early '70s, I had such a bloody attitude about my work. I find it quite amusing, actu-

(continued on page 68)

Art: Kelley Jones/Malcolm Jones III/Colors: Steve Oliff

Art: John Bolton

Gaiman keeps returning to *Sandman* because it allows him to tell any story.

By JOE NAZZARO

Dreaming of Miracles

Even knowing "The Sandman" doesn't

Within the space of a few short years, Neil Gaiman has become a force to be reckoned with in the comics industry. *Black Orchid*, his first title for DC, was a surprise hit in 1988. Gaiman was praised, not only for his unusual handling of such veteran characters as Batman and Lex Luthor, but also for reviving an obscure 1970s heroine who had faded into oblivion.

Gaiman's next project was *The Sandman*, a book that had actually been created *before Black Orchid*. As Gaiman recalls, his *Sandman* outline sat on editor Karen Berger's desk for some time until Dick Giordano and Jenette Kahn asked to see it. A few months later, *Sandman* was one of DC's bestselling horror titles.

The last several months have been busy ones for Neil Gaiman. He has a new novel out, a Prestige mini-series from DC, and enough upcoming projects to fill a large file cabinet. That's not including his two regular books, the monthly *Sandman* and the bi-monthly *Miracleman* for Eclipse.

Gaiman's first love is *Sandman*, a book which continues to shock and delight its readers with its unusual storylines and a title character who often appears for no more than a few panels. One of the joys of writing *Sandman*, according to Gaiman, is the freedom to write whatever kind of story takes his fancy. "When I sat down to figure how I was going to write *Sandman*," he recalls, "right from the very beginning, what I didn't want to do was a one-note comic, a monster of the month. I didn't want to do somebody who fights crime, because they have to fight crime every issue. I could see myself after six months of that, throwing up my hands in horror, and going off to do something completely different.

"What I wanted to do was figure out a way to do a comic that could be completely different when I wanted it to be, but still wouldn't break with the spirit of what I wanted to do. That was what *Sandman* was: a thing that allowed me to tell *any* kind of story I wanted to tell. He doesn't have to fight crime or battle anything. Mostly, he would like to be left alone."

Sandman is presently in the middle of "Season of Mists," an extended storyline scheduled to run until issue

"Issue #2 is the only one I couldn't get in there and mess with because it's the Spectre and the whole cast of performing, all-singing, all-dancing extras," notes Gaiman of his unique take on *The Books of Magic*.

"By definition, [Alan Moore] is probably *the* hardest act to follow," admits Gaiman of his *Miracleman* inheritance.

Art: David Mckean

Art: John Bolton

Gaiman's treatment of Dr. Fate is nothing compared to what he'd like to do with "Dr. Strange: The Missing Years."

#27. "It picks up on *Sandman* #4 and #9," explains Gaiman, "the Hell issue and the African folk tale. Essentially, what happens is in *Sandman* #21, it's pointed out to the Sandman rather forcefully that his action of condemning a 16-year-old to Hell for 10,000 years because she felt it wasn't a good thing to be his lover was possibly not the nicest thing to do. He says, 'OK, I'll go and get her out.' It's 'Lucifer: The Rematch,' *Sandman* #4 on a much bigger scale, not entirely as anyone would suspect, except me.

help Neil Gaiman get any rest.

"The upshot is very strange and confusing, with a number of gods appearing: Norse gods, Egyptian gods, Japanese gods, we have Order, we have Chaos, we have demons, we have angels getting involved, and on another level, we have the dead coming back to Earth. That's the story that Matt Wagner did, which was set in a boys' boarding school. After that, I'll probably be exhausted and settle down to do a bunch of short stories again."

Gaiman's other regular book is *Miracleman*, which he took over with issue #17. Following in the footsteps of Alan Moore (CS #7) is a prospect that would discourage most writers. For Gaiman, it was a challenge he accepted with only the slightest hesitation. "Alan is a very hard act to follow. By definition, he's probably *the* hardest act to follow. What made it marginally easier was that Alan asked me to do it back in 1986. The phone rang, and he said, 'Neil, I'm going to be finishing *Miracleman* at the end of Book Three. I'll probably finish it in six to eight months. Would you like to take it over?' My jaw dropped and I said, 'Yeah! I don't know if I can do it, but OK.'

"What was bizarre was that I had plotted most of the stories in 'The Golden Age' back in 1986, and when I came to write them in 1990, I discovered I wasn't the same person anymore. I had to go into each of the stories I had plotted and find out what made it interesting for me *now*. For example, the return of Gargunza is actually a plot that I had four years ago. The fact that it's now all about Andy Warhol, narrated by Andy Warhol, and drawn as if Warhol was doing comics is something that I've done now to get back into the story."

In "The Golden Age," Miracleman will be taking a back seat for a few months as the book explores the idea of mankind living in a perfect society. While some readers may not be ready for utopian comics, Gaiman promises that things will soon get much darker. "After 'The Golden Age,' we'll have a story called 'The Silver Age,' in which one old *Miracleman* character comes back from the dead. It will be focusing almost exclusively on Miracleman, Miraclewoman and Winter, as well as what it's like in this society 10 years on. Following that will be a story called 'The Dark Age,' which will begin about 200 years from now, with another *Miracleman* character coming back from the dead."

Gaiman will also be bringing back some long-discarded ideas and characters from the Silver Age of comics, which, for better or worse, have been

Miracleman Characters: Trademark Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. & Neil Gaiman

Art: Kelley Jones/McGuire Jones III/Colors: Steve Oliff

For the time being, Gaiman and the Sandman will be traveling the same path, which includes a graphic novel en route.

Lucifer.
Where is she? What have you done to her? Where have you hidden her?
HELLO, DREAM.
TAKE OFF THAT SILLY HELMET, AND WE'LL TALK.
I will not be tricked by you, Lucifer Morningstar.

Art: Kelley Jones/Malcolm Jones III/Colors: Steve Oliff

"It's 'Lucifer: The Rematch,' *Sandman* #4 on a much bigger scale, not entirely as anyone would suspect, except me, of course," says Gaiman of the current "Season of Mists" storyline.

forgotten over the years. "In the '80s, people would take all the dumb concepts and look at them realistically, and they threw many of them away. I happen to think a lot of them are nice, and you're going to see them in *Miracleman*, so if you want to see red kryptonite, green kryptonite and gold kryptonite again, you'll see them in *Miracleman*," Gaiman reveals. "If you want to see the Space Canine Patrol Corps again, they're going to be in *Miracleman*. If you want to see the Superman robots, they'll be there. They're going to be changed in the same way that Alan at one point did the bottle city of Kandor. Instead of taking them in *Superman*, what I'm doing during 'The Silver Age' is grabbagging them and playing around with them in the Miracleman world. I still don't know if red kryptonite is going to be a drug, a mineral or a venereal disease. What happens if you have a giant ant's head for 24 hours?"

His latest project is *Books of Magic*, a four-issue, Prestige Format guide to DC's magical universe. The writer had originally turned it down when Karen Berger offered him the title, but later changed his mind after devising an idea that would make it work. "It started out with me thinking of *A Christmas Carol*," he remembers, "with Ebenezer Scrooge being taken by the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. OK, we've got a kid, he's 12 years old, and he has the potential to be the most powerful magician the world has ever seen *if* he chooses the path of magic.

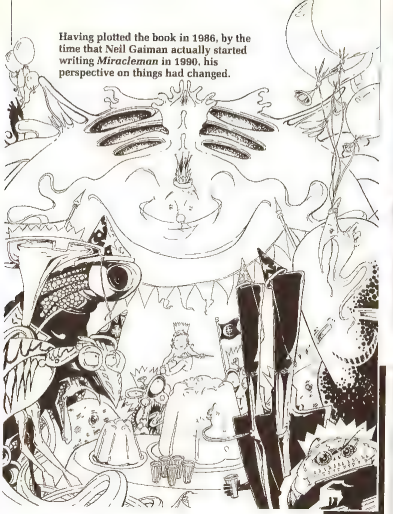
"What happens is that a bunch of people who John Constantine sarcastically refers to as 'The Trenchcoat Brigade' get together: The Phantom Stranger, Dr. Occult, Constantine and Mr. E. They agree to educate the child so that he can make the right decision. The Stranger shows him the past, Constantine takes him around America, Dr. Occult takes him into far lands and fairy lands, and E shows him the future, into the very end of the universe itself."

Although *Books of Magic* is intended as a guide to DC continuity, Gaiman says he still had the opportunity to give many of the characters his own personal slant. "Issue #2 is the only one I couldn't get in there and mess with," he confesses, "because it's the Spectre, Madame Xanadu, Baron Winter, Zatara and the whole cast of performing, all-singing, all-dancing extras. *Magic* #3 has almost no DC stuff in it. The Sandman comes in at the end, and we get a brief tour of some of the other realms, but it's basically a fairy tale. You go to the Goblin Market, you meet the Fairy Queen. The first part of *Magic* #4, the near future part, is DC continuity, but when we start getting towards the end of time, that's 'Neil continuity.'

"What I didn't do, with the exception of dear old Mr. E, a complete and utter cipher, I *didn't* mess with the characters. I gave them my own slant and my own perception, but it's not that I've done anything radical to them. My Zatanna, for example, is a slightly nicer and a more sensible person than any of the other Zatannas I've seen so far, but that's just because I tend to write sensible women."

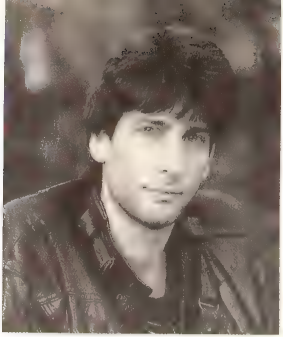
One character that Gaiman has developed a particular fondness for is Mr. E, whose previous outings were limited to a few issues of *House of Secrets*. "He's basically a character

All Sandman & Books of Magic: Trademark & Copyright 1990, 1991 DC Comics Inc.



Having plotted the book in 1986, by the time that Neil Gaiman actually started writing *Miracleman* in 1990, his perspective on things had changed.

Art: Mark Buckingham



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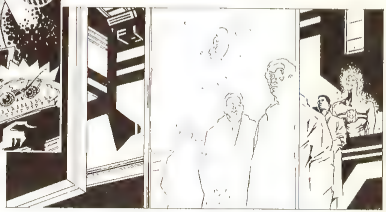


Art: Mark Buckingham

While Miracleman has been taking a back seat to "The Golden Age," he and another character will return in "The Silver Age."

who's completely mad!" Gaiman laughs. "He's about as well-balanced as an upturned pyramid, but he can also walk into the future, which none of the others can do, and he can, to some extent, see things. He's not entirely blind, but what he can see, he considers to be the good and evil in peoples' souls. Mr. E's viewpoint is, 'Maybe one day, you'll do something bad, so I'll kill you now and make sure that never happens.' He's not exactly a nice person to hang around with, and he has a hidden agenda insofar as he figures this kid Tim could be very powerful one day, and there's the possibility he could go bad, so Mr. E has plans to kill Tim.

"Mr. E has proved to be so popular that he has spun himself off into his own series, which is just going to be called *E.* I've seen the outline for it, and it picks up where the *Books of Magic* leave off. It'll be a very strange series."

Gaiman has also recently seen publication of his first novel, *Good Omens*, written with fantasy humorist Terry Pratchett (STARLOG #157). Explaining the genesis of the collaboration, Gaiman relates, "In brief, I wrote about 5,000 words of *Good Omens* five years ago, but then, I didn't do anything with them. I showed them to Terry, but basically, I left them in a bottom drawer. Eighteen months later, Terry asked me if I was doing anything with the stuff, and I said no. He said, 'I would love to do it. Either sell me the idea or let's do it together.' I said, 'What the hell, let's do it together,' so we had nine very crazy weeks of writing.

"By that time, I found that I no longer had the story on disk so I sent the printout I still had in the file cabinet to Terry, and he typed it back into his computer. By the time he had done that, the first 5,000 words had become 10,000 words, and after that, we just wrote."

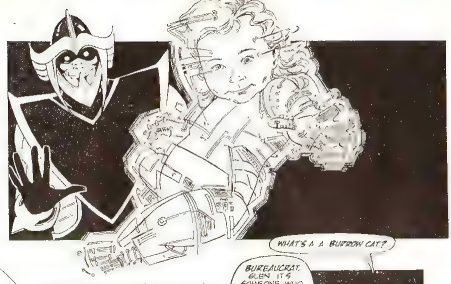
While the dust jacket to *Good Omens* states the book was written "in the four or five hours a day that both authors were awake," Gaiman is quick to point out the collaboration wasn't that cut-and-dried. "It's a terribly simplistic way of looking at it because the book was being continuously plotted by Terry and myself over the phone. If you run into a sequence in the book that was written by somebody, it doesn't necessarily mean it was written by the person who thought of it.

"Point two, we wrote much of it on disks which went back and forth, and while we tried to make sure there was only one master version, what we were doing was continuously going back and forth in the post, and we would mess with it. One of us would do a first draft scene, and the other would go back and do a rewrite, adding stuff to it. The third thing is that we didn't take chapters or anything like that. We tended to take characters and follow them for a way and then turn them over to the other person.

"The flip side of this is that there are now passages where we don't know who wrote what. The text has gone into meltdown. There are scenes that Terry has congratulated me on, saying, 'I love that bit you put in,' and I would say, 'I thought you put it in!' There were times when I said, 'One line that I'm really proud of—' and Terry said, 'You wrote that? I thought *I* wrote it!' "

All Miracleman Art: Copyright 1991 Mark Buckingham

Look out for the return of funky gimmicks from the Silver Age of comics in *Miracleman*.


WHAT'S A BUZZROW CAT?
BUREAUCRAT. WELL, IT'S SOMEONE WHO MANIPULATES AND UTILIZES INFORMATION AND CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND THEY REGULATE THINGS FROM AN OFFICIAL STANDPOINT
IF A MAMMOTH DIES, THE BLUE MAMMOTHS AGREIN A NEW ONE TO TAKE THEIR PLACE
HUH?
OH! A BUREAUCRAT IS SOMEONE WHO KNOWS LOTS OF THINGS, BENNY.
OH
Art: Mark Buckingham

The good times may come to an end with the beginning of "The Dark Age."

Art: Mark Buckingham

Mist is one of Miracleman's seeds.

"Winter's Tale" gives another glimpse at life in Miracleman's perfect society.

Returning to the subject of comics, now that Gaiman has made his mark with DC, does he have any interest in writing a book for Marvel? "Chris Claremont rang me up last night and suggested that we do a Phoenix/Death mini-series," the author grins wickedly. "All those people who were hoping the big Marvel/DC crossover would be Batman and Wolverine are going to be very disappointed! I get the impression from Marvel that those things I would do...They would hire me to do a series, I would do the first issue, and they would say, '(Expletive deleted)!'

"I would like to do 'Dr. Strange: The Missing Years.' You look at Dr. Strange, he's a successful surgeon, then he's an alcoholic and a Skid Row bum, then he goes out to Tibet to see the Ancient One. I always wondered: What does a defrocked surgeon, a disbarred doctor do in Greenwich Village in 1962 to get the money to go to Tibet? I could do this great mini-series about Dr. Strange back in those days, stealing drugs and doing abortions on back streets to get the money to go to Tibet. I really don't see Marvel going for it."

While "Dr. Strange: The Missing Years" may not be part of Gaiman's plans for the near-future, his list of other projects is still sufficient to keep him busy for the next several years. A partial tally includes:

—*Night Circus*, a Batman book drawn by Simon (*Lobo*) Bisley.

—*Sweeney Todd*, with Tom (*Puma Blues*) Zuli for *Taboo*. Gaiman says the project is in the formative stages right now. "There's a lot of research I have to do in the British Museum, and it's mainly getting the time to spend there."

—A still-secret project with Matt Wagner with "a major DC character."

—A Death mini-series called *The High Cost of Living*, which Gaiman hopes Mike Dringenberg will paint.

—A second novel called *Wall*, 5,000 words of which are now sitting in a drawer waiting to be finished.

—Two *Hellraiser* stories for Epic. The first is co-written by Pete Atkins, who wrote the screenplay for *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*. The other story is waiting to be illustrated by Dave McKean.

—A Sandman graphic novel by Gaiman and McKean.

—*Signal to Noise*, also by Gaiman and McKean. A collection of the strips originally serialized in *The Face*, to be published by Victor Gollancz, the British publisher of *Good Omens*. The duo is also doing another book for Gollancz, *Mr. Punch*.

In addition, Gaiman says that several studios are now bidding for the film rights to *Good Omens*. A Gaiman/Pratchett screenplay is part of the deal.

With so many projects resting on the back burner, Gaiman can't help feeling annoyed every so often due to lack of time. "It's frustrating, because whenever you get to a project, you've moved on. It would be a terrible thing to get to *Sweeney Todd* and find out that I wasn't interested anymore. With the Batman thing, I've already had to reassess what I thought about it four different times. When I first wanted to do it, there was a huge thrill that I was doing Batman. I am jaded and blasé about it now. I would love to be working full time at *Wall* or *Sweeney Todd*. I would love to get *Night Circus* finished because it's three years old. It is frustrating, except for *Sandman*. The joy of doing *Sandman* is doing it month after month, which is nice."

Frustrations aside, Neil Gaiman continues to be one of the busiest writers in comics. Judging from his list of accomplishments, a list that continues to grow every month, he wouldn't have it any other way.

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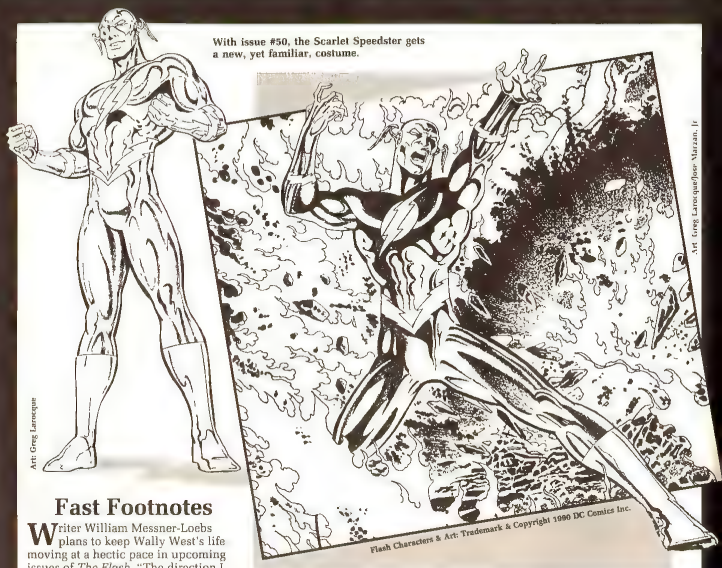


With issue #50, the Scarlet Speedster gets a new, yet familiar, costume.

Fast Footnotes

Writer William Messner-Loebs plans to keep Wally West's life moving at a hectic pace in upcoming issues of *The Flash*. "The direction I was given when I took over the book was that because the Flash moves so fast, it makes sense that his life is *never* stable," the scribe explains. "So, after a three-part Vandal Savage storyline that wraps up in issue #50, Wally's life will be pushed in a new direction—he's going to end up with money again. While looking around for some way to destabilize his life again, I decided that he had just about gotten used to being lower middle-class, and now he's going to be rich again."

According to Messner-Loebs, the Scarlet Speedster will have to earn his newfound riches by solving a murder mystery in an old mansion, but not before he takes care of his income tax troubles, which he inherited during his previous tenure as a millionaire.

"Wally's going to get out of the income tax situation in a very unique way," the writer assures. "In issue #52, he'll do a little 'freelance' work for the IRS. This gangster-financier looks like he's about to jump the country, and he has collected the regular batch of renegade super-villains to protect him. The FBI and DEA are all closing in on him, but the IRS wants to be there first to collect their money, so they send Wally in to get it and to get him. It's basically one of the more action-oriented stories, with the Flash having to go through various kinds of hell to get this money back." Messner-Loebs adds that Wally won't be "up to speed" on his financial situation until #56.

The Kapitalist Kouriers, the Russian super-speedsters formerly known as Blue Trinity, are also returning for a multi-part story that begins with issue #51. "We first meet a Russian super-villain called Proletariat, an old-line Stalinist who Wally has to stop from self-destructing all over Keystone City," Messner-Loebs says. "This whole Russian storyline will consummate somewhere in the late '50s, where they all go back to Russia and make some sort of accommodation. After all, the world has changed considerably since the beginning of the new *Flash*'s run, when [writer] Mike Baron originally introduced the Red and Blue Trinities. I thought it was time to recognize that."

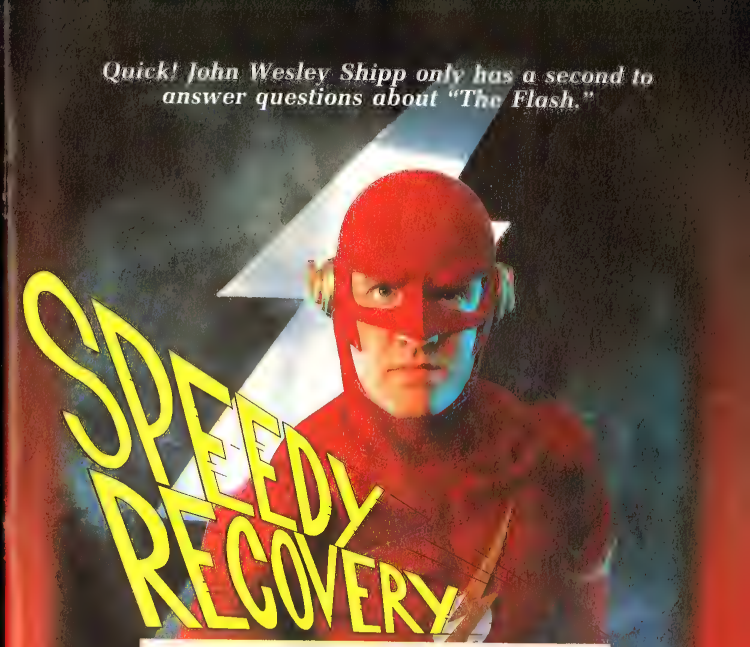
Other storylines currently in the works include another team-up with Superman [a follow-up to the Superman-Flash race held earlier this year in *Adventures of Superman*], and Wally's visit to the *Flash* movie. "We were with the cast and crew of the *Flash* TV series recently," says the writer, "and I thought it would be interesting to have Wally visit the set of a *Flash* movie being made that details Barry Allen's life. We didn't want it to be a TV series, because that would be a little too close."

"It makes sense that his life is *never* stable," says writer William Messner-Loebs, who plans to keep Wally West's life at a fast pace—including a visit to the set of *The Flash* movie.

As for *The Flash* TV series on CBS, William Messner-Loebs is impressed with the show's direction, and its use of the Barry Allen character. "All of us at DC who were involved with the show agreed that it had to be pretty much Barry Allen," he explains. "If it were Wally, there would be too much history involved as to *why* he was the Flash. It just didn't seem as practical."

—*Michael McAvennie*

Quick! John Wesley Shipp only has a second to answer questions about "The Flash."



SPEEDY RECOVERY

By MARC SHAPIRO

John Wesley Shipp has a cold. It's not the typical reaching for a hanky, more like coughing, sneezing, sniffing, sounding like Pee-wee Herman. It's not a pretty picture of the actor who portrays *The Flash*.

"Playing the Flash does tend to get a bit unhealthy," croaks Shipp in a very unsuperheroic manner. "Wearing the Flash costume is like wearing two wetsuits. It doesn't breathe at all and, after working in it for about an hour, somebody will come along, touch one of the muscles and about a gallon of water pours out. They try to dry me out between takes, but most of the time, I'm walking around in a soggy costume. And when you shoot so much at night, colds tend to come with the territory."

Health aside, Shipp seems to be very comfortable with *The Flash* during a pre-shooting interview in his makeup trailer. Its ratings steady, *The Flash* was recently given a commitment for a full season by CBS. After an erratic start, the stories have improved considerably and, most importantly, Shipp has settled into his superheroic role.

"Yeah, I've pretty much gotten used to playing the Flash," he acknowledges. "And it's not just the Flash. I'm feeling equally at home in the skin of Barry Allen. I can tell I'm at ease because I'm beginning to take more chances with the characters. I'm doing more ad-libbing. I'm asking more questions about what motivates them. I feel like I'm getting deeper into these characters. What I'm discovering is that there's more to the

Flash and Barry Allen than what people see on the surface."

Shipp has obviously immersed himself in the duality of his TV role. The actor, serious but peppering the conversation with subtle humor, invariably draws comparisons between the police lab scientist and his crime-fighting alter-ego. He's detail-oriented and insightful almost to the point of being Zen. But he stops short of describing *The Flash* as realistic.

"*The Flash* isn't something that could really happen, and that's what makes doing this show so much fun," he offers. "I certainly don't think a human being could suddenly obtain super-speed and break the sound barrier. But because we're working a concept based on an unbelievable event, we can build our own reality and to our world, *The Flash* is definitely believable."

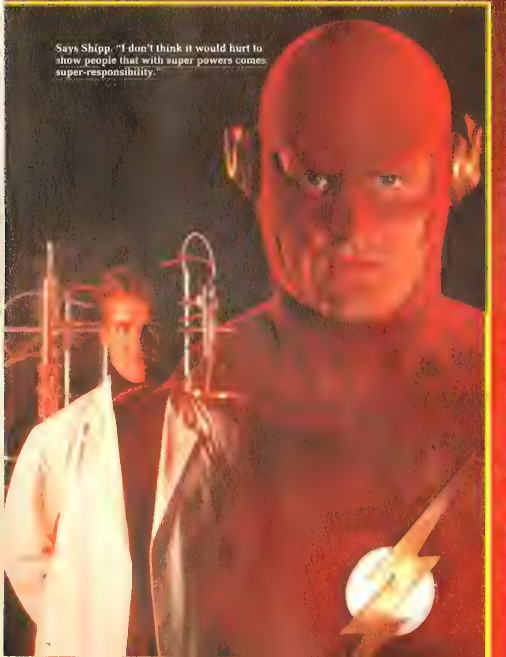
And it is a series that he thinks people will care enough about to watch on a regular basis.

"This is entertainment. People will tune in because they like the characters, the FX and the stories we tell. But once they're plugged into those aspects, I think they'll discover the less-than-perfect nature of the people in the show. Who knows? They may even see something of themselves in what Barry and the others go through."

The actor, currently on the big screen in *The Neverending Story II: The Next Chapter*, had no illusions when offered the part of the Flash. Still, he had numerous reservations.

"There was some initial fear that I would end up being typecast. I was also aware of how comic book heroes had been treated on television in the past and I didn't want to end up being the next Batman [the TV version] I didn't want to be a one-dimensional, camp superhero in spandex."

But when I read the pilot and met with Paul De Meo and Danny Bilson, I immediately knew that *The Flash* would be something different. There were themes and feelings running through the script that would make this a sophisticated entertainment for adults as well as children. I knew immediately that I was interested in doing it."



Says Shipp, "I don't think it would hurt to show people that with super powers comes super-responsibility."

Shipp also knew a good deal about the title character. "I did read the Flash comics as a kid, and I've always felt that everyone should have at least one superhero and Flash was the one I chose. Paul and Danny made their comics available to me. I read through them more than once."

Shipp went through several issues and discovered that what transpired in the comic books and what the TV producers had in mind for the Flash were exceedingly different.

"The comics I got were more comic-like than the show. What I liked about the comics was that the Flash was one of the lighter, cleaner superheroes. There was nothing dark or neurotic about Barry Allen. What Danny and Paul had written was a character who was surrounded by these tough street cops and Barry was his career choice. So, when he accidentally gets doused with chemicals that make him faster than anyone else in the Universe, what happens to Barry is a very funny way in every episode."

of the Flash is very much the new wave of treating superheroes on film. Yet he sees some differences and similarities between the Flash and his comic-to-film predecessors, Superman and Batman.

"The Flash is like Superman in that his speed is a physical superpower. He's like Batman in that his career as a superhero is marked by many emotional conflicts. But I wouldn't really put him exactly in either camp. I would say the Flash is somewhere in-between the two."

Shipp suggests that the key to playing his role has been to look for a [illegible] and that I can flesh out." He also offers that his approach to playing the [illegible] since the pilot.

"Early, I didn't see the Flash as a separate entity. He was sort of an extension of Barry's fantasy life that allowed him to put on the mantle, go out and kick ass and really get off. He was the guy who could go out into the streets and answer his father's criticisms of him.

"But as I've continued to play him, I find that the two characters are be[illegible] when I go into the Flash, in the co[illegible] I see or [illegible] and I'm [illegible] Barry is [illegible] ...ved as we get [illegible] decisions to make and the more inter[illegible]

The seeds of that situation were [illegible]

In a story very much inspired by the pulps and old comics, it was the Flash vs. the Ghost (Anthony Starke).

a formula of putting on the red suit and fighting crime each week.

"I loved the pilot because it played as a drama of relationships and conflicts in the Allen family with the Flash element being a psychological result of those actions. It was the death of Barry's brother and his desire to seek revenge that resulted in the Flash and, as an actor, I was able to wrap myself in those emotions. Originally, the pilot was going to be a set-up in which Barry would defeat his brother's killer and decide never to put the suit on again, but situations would arise that would force him to keep doing so. That idea has gotten a little bit scrambled because episodes have been airing out of order and the reluctance to become the Flash has disappeared. But I still think the pilot did a wonderful job of setting up the conflicts we're dealing with now."

Shipp also has high praise for two of the show's early episodes, "Watching the Detectives" and "Blue Paradise."

"I liked 'Watching the Detectives' because it gave me so much to do. We had Barry fixing the casino and having a bit of a romantic interest. For me, that episode had a little bit of everything. 'Blue Paradise' was also good in that it had a heart-warming story, great special FX and a way-out '60s drug czar. That episode combined all the elements that we're trying to get in every show."

Shipp's "Casino," a special effect that combines various film speeds

"What I'm discovering is that there's more to the Flash and Barry Allen than what people see on the surface," notes John Wesley Shipp.

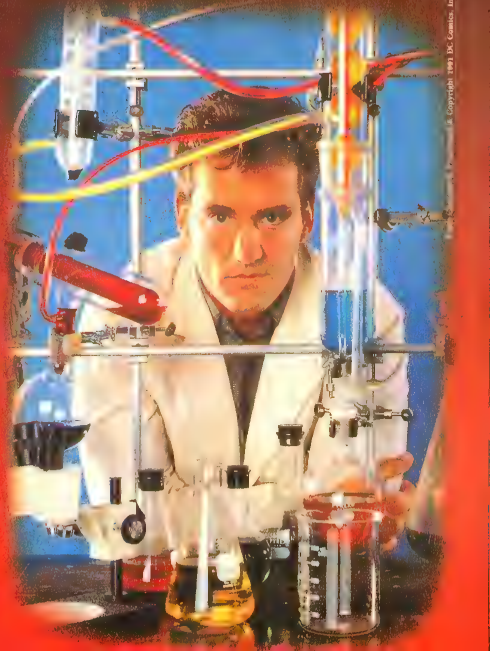
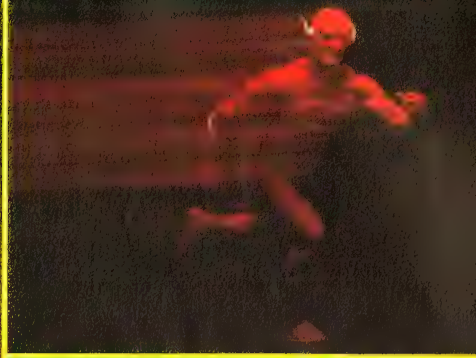


Photo by Frank Connor © Copyright 1991 DC Comics, Inc.



"I think it would be fantastic to do a story where Barry really abuses the power and becomes a villain and actually gets off on being that way," says Shipp.

Crime fighting is a lonely job. Long after everybody has gone home, Shipp still has scenes to shoot.

and blue screen, requires the actor to spend a great deal of time running on a treadmill in front of a blue screen.

"And because of that, I've managed to stay in pretty good shape. I've got a stunt double but I'm in every FX scene where I'll be recognizable, and so, I get quite a workout. It's not uncommon for me to lose six pounds a day while shooting."

One element of the *Flash* schedule that took quite a bit of getting used to was being alone.

"The other actors, even my co-stars, basically come and go," Shipp notes, "and I'm left there by myself all day, every day. Amanda [Pays] comes in, we do a couple of scenes and she leaves. Then, Alex [Desert] comes in, we do a scene and he leaves. Then, the guest villain comes in, we do a scene and he leaves. By the day's end, I'm thinking to myself, When do *I* get to leave?"

John Wesley Shipp was born in Norfolk, Virginia. With the encouragement of his family, Shipp studied piano and developed a strong, strong voice that would serve him well in musical theater.

Shipp, during his period, had his first informal taste of speed.

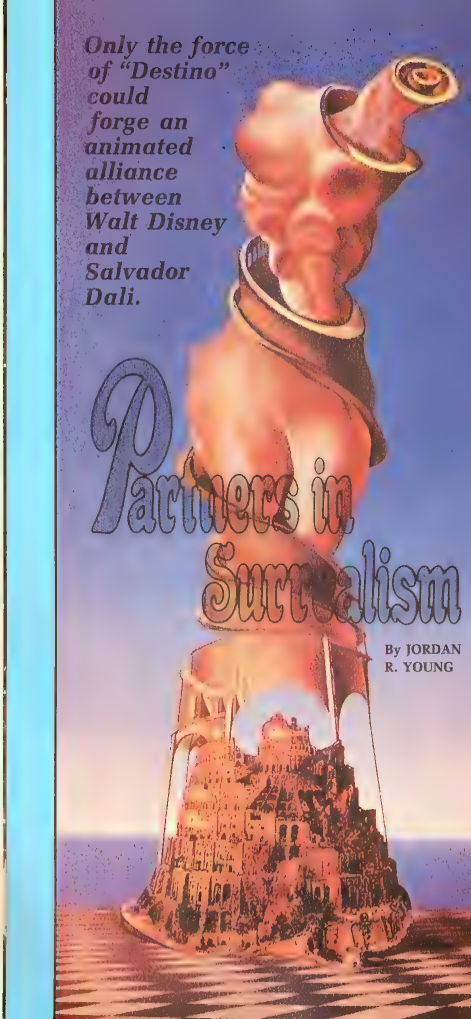
"I ran track in high school," remembers the actor, "and as I recall, I was pretty fast. Being small as I was fast always seemed to be an ability. I think if I had known the Flash was in me [then], I might have taken it a little more seriously."

Shipp studied acting and music at the University of Evansville for two years before dropping out and heading for New York, where acting classes and a succession of odd jobs kept his head above water.

But in 1980, he landed the role of Drew Nelson in the daytime soap opera *Guiding Light*. In 1985, Shipp moved to the soap opera *As the World Turns* where he portrayed a character named Jeffrey Stone for four years, and for the role of Jeff Stone earnings. The following year, he took a second Daytime Emmy for his [illegible] performance on the soap opera *Santa Barbara*.

"The most important thing I can do, doing the show and how I do it, is an ongoing process of [illegible] in an extremely short amount of time," remarks Shipp. "And my storyline was on the front burner. I would have to learn as much as 15 pages of dialogue a day. I had [illegible] and a half minutes [illegible] scenes and a half minutes [illegible]

(continued on page 66)



Only the force of "Destino" could forge an animated alliance between Walt Disney and Salvador Dali.

Partners in Surrealism

By JORDAN R. YOUNG

Of all the strange liaisons produced by Hollywood, the coupling of Salvador Dali and Walt Disney was perhaps the strangest. While the brainchild of that union was never given the green light, it nevertheless refuses to die; every two or three years, the project is retrieved from oblivion and revived as a possibility.

To Disney *Destino* was "just a simple love story—boy meets girl." But to Dali, it was "a magical exposition on the problem of life in the labyrinth of time," in which limp watches fell from heaven, monstrous telephones sprouted legs, sculptures sprang to life and a trickle of ants became a swarm of bicycle riders.

The project was initiated in 1946 when Disney, who owned the rights to a Mexican love ballad by the same title, commissioned the famed surrealist painter to do a story treatment based on his interpretation of the song. Planned as a combination of animation, live action and special effects, the end product was to have been one segment (about six minutes long) of a package film along the lines of *The Three Caballeros* or *Make Mine Music*.

"The name of the song probably appealed more to Salvador Dali than the music," asserts former studio artist John Hench, who assisted Dali in the preparation of storyboards. "Dali had a thing for destiny."

Hench, now Senior VP of Walt Disney Imagineering, remembers Dali as "a kind of renaissance man" who, unlike his public image, was perfectly sane. "Dali said, 'The difference between me and a crazy person is, a crazy person dwells in a kind of fantasy; he's in another room from reality. When I walk in that room, I know where I am; I leave the door open. A *real* crazy person can't get out; the door is locked.'"

Dali was given complete freedom at Disney, Hench recalls. "Walt came in and looked at the work from time to time. He saw the storyboards in progress and decided to let Dali go ahead and see what would happen. Walt was entranced by the whole thing. They had a rapport right from the beginning that was unusual. They got along remarkably, without much conversation. There was a sympathy there."

In addition to working on the storyboards, Hench had the task of "trying to keep the project in some kind of shape we could handle. Dali would usually do a key position and then I would fill in the in-betweens, trying to segue from

one idea to another. He had a concept he was going to stick to in a broad sense, but he shared a lot with Walt in his inventive ability. Walt always came in with more situations than perhaps a story could hold, and Dali was the same way. Every morning, he had new ideas. I'm sure we could never have fit all of them in the original time allotted."

The plot, as complicated as it became, couldn't accommodate the fruit of Dali's unfettered imagination. "He was so prolific with ideas I don't think even Luis Bunuel [who worked with Dali on *Andalusian Dog* and *L'Age d'Or*] could use them all," says Hench. "We would go see some really mediocre Western at this little theater in Monterey. Dali would be absolutely entranced, and then afterward, he would tell me what the picture meant. The inevitable stampede of the bulls would be somebody's libido, the short little man would be the alter-ego of the protagonist. He built fabulous stories out of these really banal pictures."

Destino borrowed liberally from the proliferation of images seen in Dali's canvases. The heroine of the piece, a young girl drawn to resemble the shadow of a bell in a church tower, was lifted from a painting he had done a decade earlier, "Suburbs of the Paranoiac-Critical Town." The idea of the sculpture coming to life was originally conceived for Ingrid Bergman while he was designing the dream scenes for Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* but was vetoed by the actress whom Dali wanted to cover with ants. One new idea for the Disney scenario involved a group of baseball players, whose actions were choreographed to resemble a ballet.

To artist Salvador Dali, *Destino* was "a magical exposition on the problem of life in the labyrinth of time."

To studio artist John Hench, *Destino* was a wondrous collaboration. "Dali had a thing for destiny," he says.

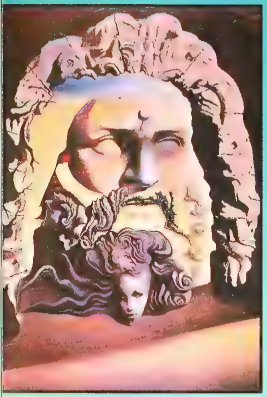
To producer Walt Disney, *Destino* was "just a simple love story—boy meets girl."

Photo: Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company

Copyright 1946, 1990 The Walt Disney Company. Courtesy Jordan R. Young

Art: Salvador Dali through Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life (Abbeville Press)

To animation fans, *Destino* is a magical opportunity forever lost, represented here in one of the few Dali paintings for the project ever published.



To former publicist Bob Moore, *Destino* "was so far ahead of its time in 1946" that it still may not be truly understood.

Dali traveled to the studio every day for a period of two months, later going up to Monterey to finish the artwork. "He came in the morning just like a regular worker. He didn't punch a clock, of course, but I don't think he would have minded punching in," says Hench. "He liked ritual."

At one point in their labors, Dali and Hench decided that Disney deserved to see what they were up to, and made a 15-second test on color film—the sole realization of the project beyond the storyboard stage. The sequence, which was screened at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art a few years ago, showed two grotesquely distorted faces mounted on the backs of turtles, moving toward each other on a bleak landscape. As they came together, the space between the profiles took on the shape of a ballerina. Her head was a baseball on the horizon.

Destino was abandoned through no fault of Dali's, simply a change of mind on the part of his employer. "Walt thought the market for package films was gone," explains Hench. "He was an enormously intuitive man; he could look into the future and project a trend. He understood the package concept as communicating a certain thing, and he figured the public needed something else."

Dali, who often said his own destiny was "to save painting from the nihilism of modern art," enjoyed little success in his ventures into film. *L'Age d'Or*, on which he collaborated with Bunuel, was poorly received when it opened. The dream sequences for *Spellbound* were severely cut. And *The Marx Brothers on Horseback Salad*, a scenario that grew out of a friendship with Harpo Marx, was never realized at all.

Still, Dali and Disney remained friends over the years. On a subsequent trip to Hollywood, Dali rode a miniature train in the producer's backyard but was frightened by its realistic precision. Disney visited the painter many times at his home in Port Lligat on the Spanish Costa Brava, once with a proposal to team up on an animated *Don Quixote*. It never reached the drawing board. They also discussed *El Cid*, for which Dali developed a story concept, but nothing came of it.

A few years after *Destino* was laid to rest, the storyboard sketches disappeared in a theft. "The whole portfolio was stolen. I don't know how many hands it passed through, but whoever stole them was discriminating. He kept the best ones," recalls Hench. Eventually, the sketches were purchased by an art dealer in New York, who tried to get Dali to autograph them. The dealer couldn't distinguish between Dali's work and Hench's, and many of the latter's sketches were authenticated as the work of the master. The material that remained was returned to the studio, but many of the treasures—including the art for the film test—were never seen again.

The sketches that survived the theft (55 by Dali, 75 by Hench) are preserved today in the studio archives. A number of *Destino* paintings, including a portrait of Jupiter that hung in Disney's office until his death, are now in storage. The works have never been appraised.

Ten years ago, studio publicist Bob Moore decided it would be nice to revive *Destino* and brought the idea to a marketing meeting. The project was casually discussed and tabled once more. However, the idea is still resuscitated every few years, and may eventually see the light of day, possibly as a segment in a new version of *Fantasia* being contemplated by Roy E. Disney.

"The film is so short it would have to be incorporated with something else, and nobody can make the decision as to what to package it with," says Bob Moore, now retired. "*Destino* could be reactivated at some point in the future," he adds, "but the film was so far ahead of its time in 1946, I don't think people would have understood it then, and I don't know that they would understand it now."

To readers, *Destino* represents a story it took almost two years to publish—due to the scarcity of film art.

All Destino Art Copyright 1981, 1982 Walt Disney Productions

CHALLENGERS

For those veteran heroes, saving the world just isn't what it used to be.

By MICHAEL McAVENNIE

It's somehow fitting that two relative unknowns in the comics industry should be the creative forces behind DC Comics' new *Challengers of the Unknown* miniseries. Tackling the latest exploits of a non-powered superhero group, whose appearances over the past 30-plus years have been infrequent, was perhaps the greatest challenge of all for screenwriter/producer Jeph Loeb and artist Tim Sale.

"The Challengers of the Unknown were the four guys who survived a plane crash and were now living on 'borrowed time,' " according to Loeb. "In many ways, they were the predecessors to the Fantastic Four. It's generally acknowledged that the Challengers were Jack Kirby's creation, and you can see many similarities to the Fantastic Four, even though it predated that book by several years.

"Ace, Rocky, Prof and Red were great characters that I really liked a lot, because, in theory, they were very different. I found, however, that when I went back and read almost the whole series, they weren't that different after all. I really wanted to do something about that."

Loeb and partner Matthew Weisman, who've co-written such movies as *Commando* and *Teen Wolf*, and are currently working as producers on *Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman*, met DC Comics president/editor-in-chief Jenette Kahn several years ago while developing a project for Warner Bros. "The three of us spent a lot of time on what was going to be a *Flash* movie," according to Loeb. "This was even before there was a *Batman* movie. We got as far as Warners wanting to do the project before deciding to pull back at the last minute. We were convinced that *The Flash* would make a better TV show than a movie, and now we're glad to be proven right."

Developing a friendship with Kahn and DC from the experience, a dream came true for Loeb when he was asked if he would like to write a comic book. "I'm a fanboy," he laughs, "so it was like, 'Where do I sign?' Of course, I immediately had in my head, 'OK, great. I'll just take over *Superman*,' and, 'You know, there are many things I've wanted to do with *Batman*.' I didn't realize at the time that there was a whole hierarchy of people that you have to get through."

Loeb quickly learned his lesson after finding out from DC vice president/editorial director Dick Giordano that only a half-dozen characters were available, including the Challengers of the Unknown. Needless to say, they hadn't been the scribe's first choice.

"I didn't really know these guys," he admits. "I *remembered* them, and I even had a few issues in my collection, but I was really a costumed, powered superhero fan, like most kids were. The telling story for me was when I went to my local comic shop after deciding to do the book. I

Not only can you no longer accept the Challengers' adventures at face value, but the look of the heroes isn't anything like their previous comic book appearances.

asked if they had any *Challengers*, and they took down a box of almost the whole run, all of them in really nice shape. I'm thinking that since there were about 70 comics in the box, the set was going to be at least $500. But when I asked the guy how much, he says, 'I don't know, 30 bucks.' So, I'm thinking to myself, 'Oh, *great*. This is obviously a comic that's in *big* demand.' "

Despite becoming comfortable with the Challs, Loeb realized that the team would have to be introduced to a new generation of readers in the eight-issue mini-series, while older fans became re-acquainted with the characters. "I said to Dick [Giordano], 'Look, with the exception of some guest shots here and there, no one has seen the Challengers since their book was cancelled in 1977. Where have these guys been since then?

"Then, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if a group of guys who were big superheroes in the '60s, in the '80s said, "Who wants to do this anymore? I mean, go out, fight villains, and almost get *killed*? Who needs that? Let's take our name, and let's merchandise the hell out of it. We'll have Challenger pajamas, Challenger lunch pails, a Challenger comic book, and make some money. Then, we can do whatever we want to do." ' So, that's what these guys did."

Besides changing their attitudes about their dangerous occupation, the Challengers underwent several major personal changes. For one thing, they've aged with time. "So many superheroes seem to be perpetually 19 or 29," Loeb explains.

"In our research, we also tried to find out if anyone knew what these guys' real names were. Keeping in tune with the fact that they're now grown men, we said, 'Wait a minute. How many 50-year-old guys named "Ace" do you know?' So, from this point on, although it really doesn't take effect until the second issue, Ace is Kyle Morgan, Red is Matthew Ryan, Prof is Walter Haley, and Rocky is Leslie Davis."

Loeb has also introduced a new Challenger, a sleazy reporter named Harold Moffet. Through the Challenger comic book and Moffet's articles in a tabloid called *Tattlerale*, the team's past exploits are chronicled, although in questionable detail.

"In order to make their adventures a little more interesting to his readers, Moffet 'polishes' them up a bit," Loeb points out. "So, what we don't know is, 'Did the Challengers over *really* fight a Volcano-Man or a Multi-Man, or were they simply characters created to make the team sound more exciting?' This is something that we deal with in the series: the reality of these men versus their myths."

Also returning in the mini series is June, who joined the Challengers in the '60s. Loeb promises the character will play an important role in the story, although he refuses to comment further. "The only thing I can tell you

is that she and Prof have gotten *very* close," he hints.

Even Challenger Mountain, the team's home and headquarters, is no longer the same. According to Loeb, the Challs still live in the mountain, but it now also serves as a museum/tourist attraction.

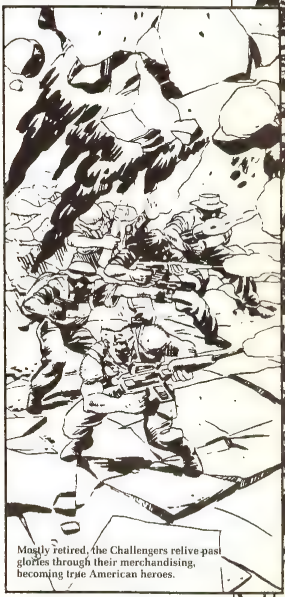
"They've all made a lot of money from merchandising," the writer expounds. "Prof and June have spent years working on an experiment to determine an alternative energy source. Kyle/Ace has spent the last few years questioning his existence, and has become more religion-oriented. Ryan/Red was always the team's hothead, so we look a little into his background and find out that this was somebody who had some very questionable kinds of dealings in South America. Les/Rocky, meanwhile, hasn't dealt with all of this very well, so all he essentially does is drink and watch TV.

"A mysterious figure enters the mountain with a passing tour group and places a bomb in the ventilation system, right at the same time the Challengers are discussing whether or not they should try to harness that alternative energy source. As they pull the switch, the mountain blows up, roughly 1,100 people are killed, and the town is destroyed."

While most ex-super teams would see this situation as ample reason to reform, it has quite the opposite effect on the Challengers. "What I liked about all of this was that everyone I pitched the story to said, 'OK, they'll get together again to find out what really happened,' but that's *not* what happens," says Loeb. "What happens is that they go to trial in the second issue, and they're eventually acquitted. By that issue's end, everyone is expecting them to put on their costumes and find out what really happened at the mountain. They all just look at each other and say, 'Goodbye. Nice knowing you. I've had enough.' Then, they each go off in a separate direction.

"An interesting question I try to deal with in *Challengers* is, 'What is this borrowed time they're supposed to be living on?' Are these still four men who got a second chance at life, which is really what borrowed time is all about? Yes. However, the plane crash which made them Challengers in the first place caught them at a time in their lives when they had everything. They were the best—the best wrestler [Rocky], the best pilot [Ace], the best underwater explorer [Prof] and the best mountain climber [Red]—and they were bored. Their plane crashed, and they woke up and said, 'We should do something with our lives.' When we pick them up again, the same thing has happened. They're rich. They live in the mountain. They're doing nothing with their lives. When the mountain blows up, they have to decide what it is they're going to do."

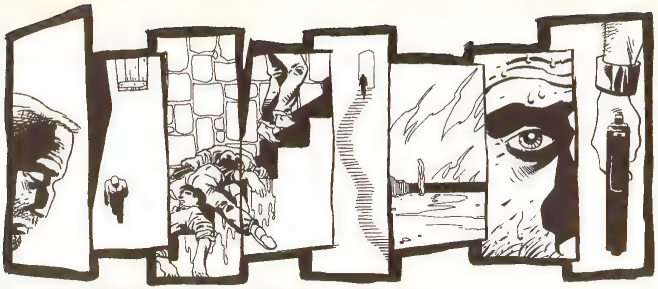
With the explosion of Challenger Mountain went the group's reasun to stay together.



Mostly retired, the Challengers relive past glories through their merchandising, becoming true American heroes.

Challengers fans will not only have to adjust to their heroes' names and personalities in the New Format mini-series, but also their faces. "One of the things I didn't want for this book were four guys who looked like Bruce Wayne with different color hair," Loeb emphasizes. "I read 70 issues of the book, and I sometimes couldn't tell them apart. If the colorist made a mistake, you were in real trouble.

"Tim did the original sketches," the writer adds, "and they had to be approved by DC, because we were potentially changing the look of the original characters. We decided that the reason they all looked like what were originally Jack Kirby's designs was



The Challengers had been given a second chance at life, but in the interim, they lost a purpose and now have a heavy debt to repay.

that was what they looked like in the Challengers comic book, so that's what everyone knows them as. But when you meet them in real life, they look completely different."

Sale, whose previous credits include *Thieves' World*, several issues of *Grendel*, *The Amazon* and the upcoming *Billy 99* for Dark Horse Comics, joined Loeb on *Challengers* after being approached by then-editor Barbara Kesel. "Barbara suggested me to Jeph, who had seen my work on *Thieves' World*," the artist recalls. "The two of us got together, and it has been great working on the project.

"The way I worked with Jeph was very different from the way I worked with most writers," Sale adds. "He likes to play around with layout a lot more than I do. When it's left up to me, my attitude towards layout is fairly straightforward. Not necessarily a grid, but I don't break the page or do any fancy tricks very often."

Sale, who points out that he was never really a fan of costumed superheroes, says that drawing non-powered heroes was what intrigued him most about *Challengers of the Unknown*. "Despite the fact that it's a superhero book," he says, "these guys don't have super powers. And, when the four of them split up, they go on to very different ventures and locales, which gave me a chance to 'ape' a number of different inking and drawing styles." Sale cites *Batman: Year One* artist David Mazzuchelli, Jim Steranko and Jack Kirby as some of his artistic influences on the series.

As for whether or not longtime *Challengers* fans will like this new version, the artist jokes, "I don't know any longtime *Challengers* fans. Seriously, I don't know. If they're really fond of the old stuff, well, this *isn't* like the old stuff. But I think it's very interesting, and what we have done to play with the conventions inside the original is sometimes funny, sometimes moving. That's the way I could most imagine being interested in reading superhero comics now—when somebody fools around a little and doesn't take all of it deadly seriously. Most of the people whose opinions I respect want to see what's going to happen next after the run of the nihilistic superhero, and this isn't that at all. I don't think it breaks any ground, but it takes many conventions and mucks around with them.

"In a way, I feel a debt to Jack Kirby," Sale admits, "not so far as his artistic influence on me for *Challengers*, but because of what he has meant to the industry. It's very important to acknowledge people who have created something. The way the comics industry was run in the past—thank God it's changing a little now—was that you created it and it was then out of your hands. I think that creation should be acknowledged every step along the line. When somebody comes along, if they haven't created something out of whole cloth, then they ought to say something about the people who helped get them to what they're doing. So, I like to take any chance I have to thank Kirby."

"Tim and I have joked from the very beginning about having to be loyal to our seven longtime *Challengers* readers," laughs Jeph Loeb. "I'm really hoping people will sample the book. I'm glad to have had an opportunity to take four guys who no one knows anything about anymore, bring them into the '90s, and give them the place that they really deserve. These guys are Jack Kirby's forgotten heroes, and I think they deserve to be known now, and known in a different way."

Will the Challengers return again? That's up to readers.

All Challengers Art: Tim Sale

All Challengers Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc.

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

His dying really shouldn't have come as a surprise to anyone, though it did. After all, the boy was going to sea at the height of World War II, when Nazi U-boats filled the very waters the ship he was aboard was approaching. He did manage to be thrown clear when explosions, courtesy of the enemy, tore the vessel apart, but even he couldn't avoid the Germans' machine gun bullets when he came bobbing to the surface, gasping for air.

Still, those he met in the afterlife couldn't understand what he was doing there; according to their records, he wasn't due for several decades. And so, after some deliberation, it was decided that he should return to Earth and right whatever wrongs he found there, aided by his guardian angel, Mr. Keeper, and any historical or fictional figure who would come whenever he spoke the word "eternity." A few years later, however, Kid Eternity all but completely vanished, apparently having finally gone to his rest.

An Eternity in Hell

Kid Eternity has been away for so long, he's almost forgotten. And he's not happy about it.

"It turns out Kid Eternity had been imprisoned in Hell at the end of all his last adventures when he was young, and that's why we haven't seen much of him for the past 40 years," reveals artist Duncan Fegredo, who with Grant Morrison is resurrecting the character for a three-part DC Prestige Format mini-series. "But he just managed to break out in the middle of somebody's party, and he has to go back to Hell to get his old comrade Mr. Keeper with this alternative comedian who actually dies in the first issue.

"The trouble with the plot for *Kid Eternity*," the artist confesses, "is the fact that Grant goes backwards and forwards in time all the time. The whole first issue takes place over about 10 minutes, and within that, there are many flashbacks to different characters which are also represented in different colors. And it actually makes it very difficult to describe on the whole. I still have to refer to the synopsis even now just to make sure I'm not doing something out of context with the artwork. I don't want to say anything else about it really, A) because I would probably get it even more mixed up, and B) because I think it's a very good story, and it would spoil it too much."

For Fegredo, it was more the opportunity to work with Morrison and the fact that "it was the first thing I had been offered by DC" than his fondness for the ghostly hero's previous series that led to Fegredo's illustrating *Kid Eternity*.

"I didn't actually know anything about it in the slightest," confides the artist, who himself is somewhat better known in his native England for his efforts there. Consequently, "I got sent a whole bunch of photocopies and things like that. They're fun in context. They're good hokum really, aren't they? They're sort of like Republic Saturday morning stuff. I quite liked having a chuckle over them, but it's not the sort of thing that I would like to have drawn. I certainly wouldn't have drawn it as well as Sheldon Moldoff anyway."

This story, he stresses, "isn't *anything* like the original series." But while the mini-series takes a dramatically different approach to characters most readers aren't likely to recognize anyway, Fegredo has chosen to make few alterations.

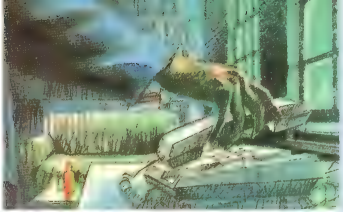
"On Mr. Keeper, as far as I've done him so far, I'm not going to change anything. He's just going to be the same as he was, this fat, old, cheerful looking chap, and that's it. The Kid himself, he's older. He's not 40 years older; I've drawn him more like about 20. He's taller. He's wearing pretty much the same sort of thing. The cummerbund is still there, and he's still wearing the Oxford back trousers and a white turtleneck sweater. The hairstyle's different. The whole character is represented as being far more ethereal, which is obviously much easier to do since it's in full color [paints] as opposed to black line. He's wearing glasses now, so there's a little trouble trying not to make him look too much like Mr. X with a wig on, but luckily not. Grant had actually drawn a sketch of the Kid, which I thought looked fine.

"But it seemed silly to change [the design] that much, really," remarks the artist. "Otherwise, it would have had very little in common with what it once was. Maybe Grant would have preferred that. I think he's probably one of...I don't know if the Kid *is* one of Grant's favorite characters. It probably says a lot about Grant if he was. But there was no reason to. I think the Kid has changed more in character.

"Kid Eternity is not so much the happy-go-lucky, all-American little chap that he was at the time when he

"It's definitely more horror and supernatural" than superheroic action, comments Fegredo. "Luckily, I haven't had to draw Kid Eternity flying around, bulging with muscles."

All Kid Eternity Art: Duncan Fegredo



Between missions for the Lords of Chaos, Kid Eternity picks out what Fegredo calls "a very relevant book really."

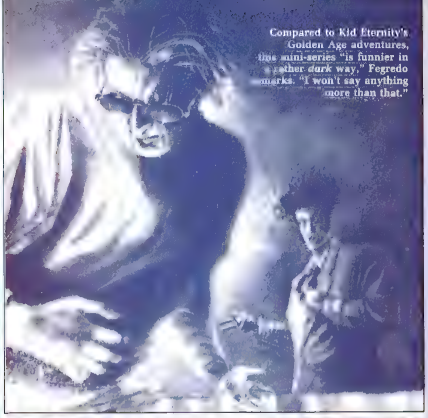
was torpedoed in the original series. The Kid has become an agent of the Lords of Chaos. His job is to create chaos in our time sphere; I won't say why. If you think about it, this is a person who has been imprisoned in Hell for the last 40 years, so his outlook on life is going to have changed considerably, which is reflected in his attitude towards the rest of the characters, particularly the dead comedian. He's more sarcastic. I think Grant wanted to appeal to older people. There's more for the punk generation, a little more anarchistic. So, that's pretty well reflected in the character."

Within the last few years, the Sandman visited the netherworld to retrieve what belonged to him, Etrigan tried to seize control of that infernal realm, and both Swamp Thing and Superman have stormed the place to rescue their friends' souls, but Fegredo comments that the land that Kid Eternity must force his way back into "is not the same sort of Hell usually depicted in the DC Universe. It probably has more in common with Alan Moore's Hell, but only more so. It doesn't rely just on that. I think Grant elsewhere described this as a yuppie Hell in the sense that he said the yuppies have taken over the River Styx and it's a slum area. So, Hell's a neverending, claustrophobic slum."

But long before he and Morrison trapped Kid Eternity in that world of brimstone and pain, Fegredo, while still an art student at Leeds Polytechnic, took his own trip there as part of an assignment to illustrate John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*.

"It was given to me by a tutor," Fegredo explains. "I don't know if he knew what else to do with me at the time. It was the sort of thing he gave to people who he liked to call 'problem students.' But it was interesting because it changed the way I work completely. I spent about a year doing *huge* black and white artwork, pen and ink and just about everything else, with white paint splattered all over it so it could be reproduced in black, just line artwork. And so, it was a lot of experimentation with texture and stuff, and I think it was that that he wanted me to tackle more than anything else. It was up to me how I interpreted it and I came up with something quite weird.

"I was trying to do these huge, sweeping visions of Hell and God knows what, fallen angels and everything, which was sort of there in *Kid Eternity*, so that was quite convenient. And I was trying to represent the whole of this massive poem tome without using text. As just a packed whole, I was trying to make the images interlink so that they could virtually be



Compared to Kid Eternity's Golden Age adventures, this mini-series "is funnier in a rather *dark* way." Fegredo smirks. "I won't say anything more than that."

"Kid Eternity looks older" after spending a few decades in Hell, notes Duncan Fegredo. "It's a slightly mature story [that] it might have seemed a little odd, lucky, tawdry putting a young child in some of these situations."

All Kid Eternity Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 DC Comics Inc.

read in their own right, so I *was* doing comics work in a sense."

Although he had long been a comics reader, Fegredo became particularly intrigued by Alan Moore and Ian Gibson's "Halo Jones" in *2000 A.D.* and Frank Miller and David Mazzuchelli's *Daredevil*, both of which he discovered while still working on his *Paradise Lost* project. Now considering becoming a comics professional himself, Fegredo took some of that work with him to a 1986 British convention and, not long after, began drawing "Doc Chaos" for *Escape* magazine and later, portions of both "New Statesmen" and "Third World War" for *2000 A.D.*'s companion title *Crisis*. But it's his first visit to the stygian pits that haunts him still.

"That adaptation of *Paradise Lost*, probably more than anything, affects how Grant wrote certain segments of the script for me. But *Kid Eternity*, as it stands, was pretty well worked out before I came along. There have been certain tweaks along the way for me specifically, but for the most part, he had done his script, he has had his comeback about what I've done, I've said, 'Hi,' at conventions, and that has been pretty much it. So, although it's a joint effort, it's a separate joint effort."

Nevertheless, since there are doubtless many readers who, like Fegredo himself, wouldn't list Kid Eternity among the best remembered of characters, one has to wonder why anyone would want to pick up this mini-series.

"I would say it was because: 'Hey, gosh, look! Here's a book that was written by Grant Morrison! Didn't he do that amazingly successful *Arkham Asylum*? And who's this weirdo who's tacked on? Oh, well. It doesn't matter. *It was written by Grant Morrison!*' And that's probably a very good reason why, because it *is* a good story. I'll stand by that, even if I get laughed at in the end."

Yet the possibility of a successful seller leading to a continuing *Kid Eternity* holds its own particular horrors.

"I hope not!" says Duncan Fegredo at the suggestion that he could very well be asked to transform the limited series into an ongoing one. "Assuming that they would be willing to do a regular painted book, with the rate I paint, I don't think it would be very feasible unless it was a rather irregular book. I don't think Grant would be interested in writing it anyway, and I wouldn't do it unless Grant was writing it. It would seem rather pointless. It's finished off so tidily. I don't know. Maybe they will bring it back. I hope not, really. I think it would be a shame. Kid Eternity has been dead and buried and in Hell for the last 40 years, and if it comes down to it, that's where he should probably stay."

The creator of *Eddy Current* and *Plastic Forks* is about to take comics readers on an epic journey to a place they've never been before.

Metropol, however, is a city—and a comic series—that's different from what readers usually find in standard superhero series.

"It takes place in a city, a metropolitan setting. The one dominant area in this book will *always* be the city," explains Ted McKeever. "It's the one recurring character that will dominate each issue. It's like a backdrop painting, or the anchor on which everything is based. Everything that happens within the title occurs in the city."

McKeever is quick to admit that *Metropol* doesn't fit into either the SF, horror or superhero genres. "There's maybe a sense of all of those in it, but nothing specific. I can't label it as a horror book, but it does have demons and other elements. I wouldn't consider it a superhero book, but there are people who have larger-than-life heroic qualities, even though they don't fly around in capes."

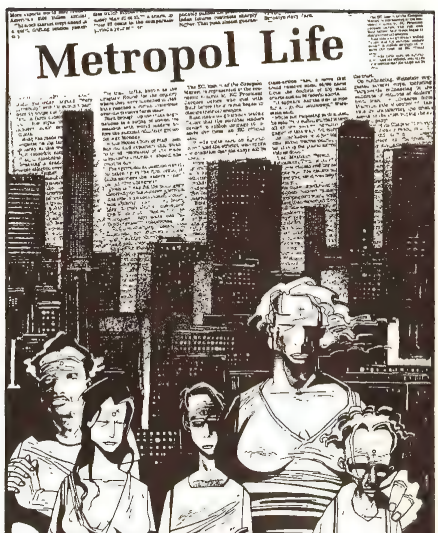
Comparisons to Moebius' *The Incal* or to *Mr. X* are more convenient than accurate descriptions, says McKeever. "It's like *The Incal* in that it's a large-scale ongoing story with many different characters: Some will evolve and some will be killed, but there are no aliens or spaceships. The story structure is similar, but the specifics are different. *Mr. X* is more of a psychological mystery that revolves around the character, though it takes place in a large city in a *film noir* style, as does *Metropol*.

"It's like neither one, but it does have elements of both," he says, explaining that the title takes place in its own world and in its own reality.

Readers who have picked up the first issue are about to see some changes made, according to the writer/artist. "There's a drastic change coming. The first three issues set up the characters and get everyone comfortable with who's in the book. Then, the majority of them *die* by issue #4!" he laughs. "They're brought back through a metamorphosis and evolve into larger-than-life heroes.

"The people in the city really don't know anything outside, so the city is essentially a whole world. So, the city is ending," he remarks, and the end of the city is as disastrous as the end of the world to its inhabitants. "There's nothing outside of the city that they deal in—it's all self-contained. So, it's basically an apocalyptic setting within the city, and they choose sides. Good is led by an army of 'angels,' if you will, and Evil is headed by an army of demons. From book four on, there is the choosing of sides and the events that lead up to the apocalypse. It becomes like the Civil War, in that there is no right and wrong within their laws.

"Book four has the first occurrence of an 'angel' against a 'demon,' and it has a domino effect. They just start to multiply."



All Metropol Art: Ted McKeever

The fate of the world can be decided on any street corner in Ted McKeever's city.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

McKeever laughs uncomfortably when he hears *Metropol* compared to normal superhero fare. "People are saying, 'For those of you who like *Fantastic Four* or *Avengers*, you'll like this one.' Well, I don't know about that!" he laughs. "I think they're just trying to tap into the audience that likes group books. This is a pretty bizarre group [in *Metropol*], but if that's what gets them, then that's fine."

With *Metropol*, he says he wants to affect readers who are more comfortable with *X-Men*. "I would like the

"The people in the city really don't know anything outside, so the city is essentially a whole world," explains creator Ted McKeever of his urban development.

For those who have already picked up *Metropol* and think they know what's going on, they're in for a surprise.

Issue #4 begins to answer the question, "What if the bad guys *did* win?"

All Metropol Characters & Art Trademark & Copyright 1993 Ted McKeever

book to be both entertaining and a little upsetting. A person who reads *X-Men* might like the ongoing battles, but even though there's good and bad, I don't want to be the one to choose the sides, as opposed to saying, 'This guy's a demon, so you should hate him.' I want to be on the sidelines, and let the *X-Men* reader say, 'I like the bad guys' or let the *Mr. X* readers say, 'Well, I like the good guys.'

"I would like the readers to be mildly confused, I guess," he chuckles. "Just to keep them on the edge at all points would be fine. But I have all intentions of explaining things and making them clear. There's a big difference between mystifying and confusing people to the point where they can't understand or grasp it."

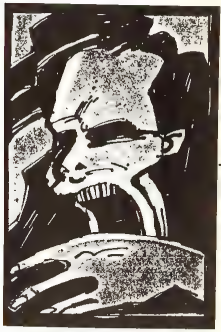
Although McKeever is known for his work on *Eddy Current*, *Transit* and *Plastic Forks*, he isn't making many concessions for the mainstream reader with *Metropol*.

"Many characters from *Eddy Current* will be in this book, and some of the characters from *Transit* are going to be coming back, so in essence, it's still very much like the others. It's mine, and I have the borderlines in my head of just how far I can go. It's just that this one deals with heroics on a larger scale. *Plastic Forks* had that heroic atmosphere, but it was basically between one or two people. This deals more clearly with good and evil, so if that appeals to the average comic reader, then that's fine. I really just want people to read and be entertained by it, but I didn't want to put Doctor Doom or the Silver Surfer in it. I was offered the opportunity by another comics company to do the story, but to include *their* characters. I just said, 'I don't think so.' "

McKeever's target audience for *Metropol* is larger than he had thought. "In the past, I would say, 'I know who reads *Eddy*, and I know who reads *Plastic Forks*.' Then, I would go to conventions, and both 12-year-old kids and 40-year-old guys would come up and say, 'I love this book.' There is no age, but the majority of my readers seem to like the alternative comics in the marketplace."

The Epic title came about because of McKeever's desire to get back to the city (after *Plastic Forks*, which was set in the desert). "My real desire was to do a book in an urban setting, I

"Because the book's title is not a character's name, there is no guarantee that *any* character will return," admits McKeever.



"I would like the readers to be mildly confused, I guess," laughs McKeever.

knew I wanted to get back into it. I've never really liked mythology, but I was interested in biblical stories, not from the religious aspect as much as these really neat stories about the battles between good and evil. I said to myself, 'If there's ever a more appropriate time for a battle, it's now.' I confined everything to one city, which basically forces everyone to choose between right and wrong.

"There are very odd elements, like the plague which runs rampant through the city. By about issue #7, the city will become cordoned off to where entry and exit is virtually impossible. People say you can't work in a vacuum, but this is what we'll have—what happens to a city that becomes a complete vacuum within itself."

McKeever says his characters are based in reality, and he is inspired by Steve Ditko's original Spider-Man, who was scrawny and not particularly muscular. "The people in my book aren't specific people that I know, but they're derived from people I know physically—a chubby guy I'll see on the street or a girl with big hips and a smaller chest. Those are the types that will end up in the book."

There are three differences between *Metropol* and most other comics, he points out. "Because the book's title is not a character's name, there is no guarantee that *any* character will return. When a character's name is the title, even if they disappear for a few issues, you know damn well they're coming back. In *Metropol*, anyone could die or leave and not come back.

"Secondly, when I was reading comic books as a kid, I always got the feeling that the villain was about to take over the world, but he's stopped just in time. Well, by *Metropol* #5, no one is there to stop this thing, and basically, the bad guy wins! It's not that I've always been rooting for the bad guy, but I always thought, 'What if the bad guys *did* win?'

"Thirdly, whenever anyone is supposed to become a hero in comics, they're either portrayed as perfect or, in the case of most vigilante characters, nuts! Characters can be more complex than that. Here, their physical structures are different. I have this chunky guy, this small, thin guy, this mousy guy—they're as heroic as they get. Visually, people come to assume heroics with Superman, when the guy down the street can be just as heroic. I wanted to break that mold."

McKeever has always considered himself on the fringe, but working for Epic has altered his perceptions.

"I see the books reaching a mainstream audience, but I don't see myself or my books as mainstream by any means," he says, admitting there are a couple of mainstream characters he'd like to work on someday.

"Knowing the way I draw, at one point, I would like to do Spider-Man,

(continued on page 68)

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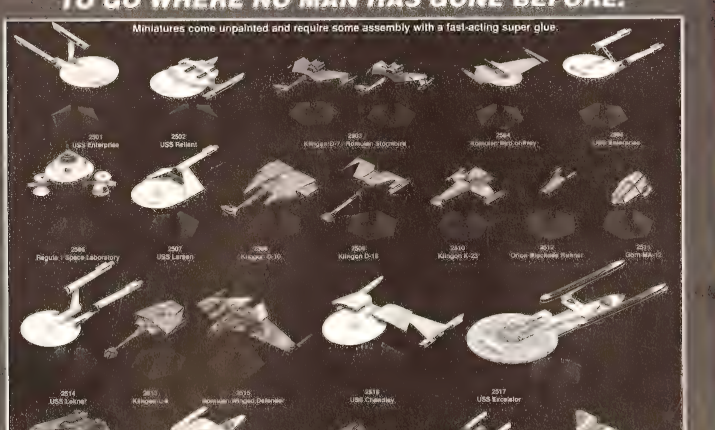
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Drawing to a Full House

Reshuffling the "Wild Cards," George R.R. Martin tries dealing them to other media.

By CRAIG W. CHRISSINGER

They started as superheroes in a series of paperback books. They've since appeared in a four-issue comic book title and a gaming manual. And if writer/editor George R.R. Martin's plans come to be, the Aces and Jokers of *Wild Cards* could end up on television one day.

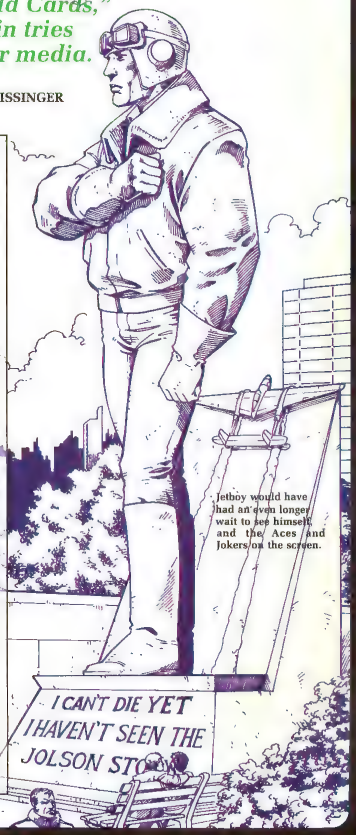
"We're negotiating," says Martin. "There's interest out there. It's just a question of whether we can make that interest firm up. Melinda Snodgrass and I have developed a treatment of *Wild Cards* as a TV project. We've pitched it to a couple of people and intend to have more meetings on it."

An acknowledged fan and collector of comic books, Martin says the roots of *Wild Cards* came from "the comics I read as a kid, and people like Lew Shiner and Howard Waldrop read as kids. The premise basically comes from a hard science-fiction device. An alien virus gets loose in 1946, and those who are infected either die or metamorphosize in strange, unpredictable ways. Some it deforms horribly, some it gives vast super-human powers."

Martin, the former writer/producer of TV's *Beauty & the Beast* and a writer for the revived *Twilight Zone*, realizes the difficulties of bringing an immense project such as *Wild Cards* to the small screen.

"It's a difficult project for television in some ways because there are so many characters and with the special FX and so forth," he admits. "It would be quite expensive to do, but I think that anybody who took a crack at it would be rewarded.

"I mean, *The Flash* is actually managing to do moderately well, despite the fact that it is appallingly bad. I think *Wild Cards* would provide a much grittier and more adult perspective on the whole question of heroism and super powers, and actually work considerably better on screen."



Jetboy would have had an even longer wait to see himself, and the Aces and Jokers on the screen.

Art: Barry Kitson Wild Cards Art Courtesy Epic Comics

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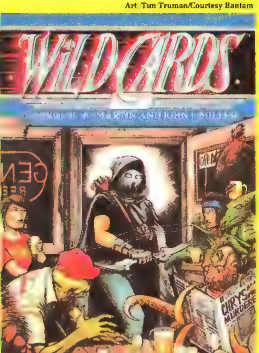
Art: Tom Truman/Courtesy Bantam



A limited FX budget would make the archer Yeoman a natural for TV translation.

Martin (who also discussed his work in STARLOG #117, #160 and #161) says the problems facing a *Wild Cards* TV project are not unique, but exist for all science fiction and fantasy programs. These problems include budget limits and whether there is an audience that can support a genre show on network television.

"All TV shows have expenses, but a science fiction show has aliens and spaceships," he comments. "It's going to be necessarily more expensive in terms of special FX, sets, costumes, makeup and all of the other things. That's a problem. Most science fiction shows have overcome that, I think, or tried to overcome that in the wrong way—by de-emphasizing those elements and producing an alien who looks just like us or some variant of that approach. When you take that kind of approach, in some ways, you remove the very things that I think people look for in science fiction. They want to see something that's a little different from other TV shows.

"The kind of audiences that traditional SF shows generate are more than adequate to support a syndicated production, but not adequate to support a network production because network expectations are higher. There are plenty of opportunities for science fiction on TV in the future. The audience is growing all the time. Potentially, you can have a hit network science-fiction series. Maybe not this year and maybe not next, but certainly within 10 years. The question is, which will be the first one and what will it be like? Obviously, I'd love it to be mine."

George R.R. Martin's great and powerful Turtle came to comic book life in Epic's *Wild Cards* mini-series.

In fact, Martin has considered the possibility of *Wild Cards* ending up on the movie screen instead of television. "I'll take either one," he remarks. "They both have their virtues and they both have drawbacks. If you go television, you're not going to have the budget. But on the other hand, you could have 26 episodes a season, considerable room to tell a considerable amount of stories and to fit many of the characters in. If you do a feature film, it will look gorgeous, but essentially, you'll have to choose one story to tell and only tell *that* story. And *Wild Cards* is full of stories."

Even if *Wild Cards* never makes it to the TV screen, the stories of the alternate Earth characters will continue in book form. "The paperback series is now contracted through the 10th anthology, but we also have two spin-off novels," states Martin. "We haven't yet decided whether the novels are going to be

In *One-Eyed Jacks*, a new gang of super-powered teens is introduced as Chris Claremont makes his *Wild Cards* debut.

Art: Tom Fleming (cartoon Bantam)

Art: Mark Nelson/Colors: Paul Mounts

considerable amount of consternation.

"We also have some interesting work by Stephen Leigh, who has created a new character called Bloat, very much one of the linchpins in this next triad. We have some new writers as well. *One-Eyed Jacks* has the first stories from Chris Claremont [CS #17] and William F. Wu. They'll be adding their

Art: Mark Nelson/Colors: Paul Mounts

Aside from the Turtle, Martin has three other major new characters he wants to deal into the *Wild Cards* world.

Art: Tom Fleming/Colors: Sam Parsons

"If there is a second [comic book] series, it will be an entirely original story," says Martin.

numbered as part of the series or whether they'll have a separate numbering or not be numbered at all. Essentially, we have a dozen books. Presuming the series continues to be successful, the next contract would be for another three books."

At present, Martin doesn't see an ending in sight or himself becoming tired of the series. The authors attempt to keep *Wild Cards* fresh with a large variety of plots and characters.

"We're not doing the same book over and over, by any means," Martin remarks. "The books we've done have had a lot of range. There are many more changes and surprises coming up in the future, and a great variety of characters, too. I have at least three principal characters waiting in the wings. Most of our writers have more than one main character. So, it's full of possibilities."

In the immediate future, Martin says the next three books, *One-Eyed Jacks*, *Jokertown Shuffle* and *Dealer's Choice*, will use previously introduced themes and take them one step further.

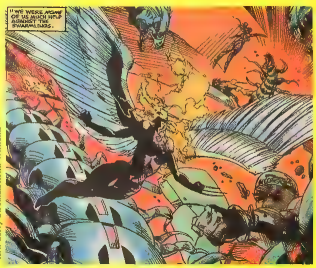
Just published, *One-Eyed Jacks* deals with the rise of "Jumpers," a new group of teenage gangs. "They have the ability to essentially steal your body, swap bodies for a short period of time, to steal, to play pranks, to kill, to do whatever they want," hints Martin. "Then, they jump back into their own bodies. Needless to say, this causes a voices to the chorus."

Martin also reveals that other writers may be joining the series in the future. "There are a few people who've expressed interest and a few people I would like to see in the books, not necessarily the same ones," he says with a chuckle. "We hope to add a few more writers in the years to come, but I can't name them until they're definite. I do believe we'll always have to keep adding new authors and new characters. Every time a new author comes in, he brings a fresh way of looking at the entire world and a fresh set of perceptions. They can give you a new angle on the older characters and the older writers, and freshen them up, too.

"A new writer also brings with him a new character. Of course, this mix creates new alignments of friendships, enemies, jealousies, rivalries and so

Art: Tim Truman/Courtesy Bantam

"I think the comic world today is extremely insular," notes Martin. "Until our comic started, most creators in the comic field hadn't been aware of us."



Art: Larry Stroman/Keith Williams

forth. There's always some interest in how the older, established characters will react to the new character."

While new people are added to the *Wild Cards* universe, the authors also are willing to kill off characters, even major ones. "It's a dangerous world in *Wild Cards*. Each author, of course, has the right to kill his or her own creations without necessarily plotting it out. When we have the death of a character at the hands of a different writer than the creator, which is most cases, those must be negotiated and plotted ahead of time. Individual characters can end or fade out as their stories are completed, but the world goes on."

In developing the books' basic plotlines, Martin says that ideas come from both himself and the core group of writers and then are discussed.

"We get together as regularly as we can," he states. "There is constant back-and-forth communication. Generally speaking, *anyone* may provide a nugget of what a triad or book will be about. If I like it, I'll take it and expand on it to come up with some kind of framework. Then, all the writers expand on that, so it's a constant process of growth and fermentation. The writers, by and large, like each other and enjoy this sort of collaborative process.

"Each writer has the right to control his own characters. If he doesn't like what's happening to his people, he can veto it and then we don't do it. Our rules are a little stricter than some of the other shared worlds in that regard."

The author is torn between which route *Wild Cards* should take: TV or film.

As for the Epic comic book miniseries of *Wild Cards* (see CS SPECTACULAR #3), Martin has enjoyed it and acknowledges the work of Lewis Shiner in getting it onto comics stores' bookshelves.

"I just got the second issue and I've been happy with what I've seen so far," he comments. "I'm not as directly concerned with it as I am with the anthologies. Lew helped sell it and ramrodded it and he has written or edited most of it, working with the other writers who've contributed collaborative segments to try to get the same mosaic feel in the comic."

In fact, the Santa Fe-based author would like to see the comic series continue. "If there is a second series, it will be an entirely original story set in the *Wild Cards* world," he says. "The present series is partially an original story—the frame story—but since the characters are new to comic readers, there are flashbacks to establish who these people are and how they came into being."

At the same time, Martin doesn't think *Wild Cards* has had much of an influence on comic books.

"I wish I could say otherwise," he remarks. "That's simply because I think the comic world today is extremely insular. Many writers and artists on comics don't read books and aren't aware of what's going on in the science fiction world or any other world. They're just very much wrapped up in comics.

"When a new ground-breaking comic comes out like *Watchmen*, which in some ways is similar to *Wild Cards*, it has a tremendous effect on the comics field because *everyone* is aware of it. At least until our comic started coming out, most of the creators in the comic field hadn't been aware of us."

Still, having the anthology series become a comic book series is gratifying to George R.R. Martin. "There's certainly an interesting circularity to it. We all got involved in this project because we love comic books and we love comic heroes and always had a sneaking ambition to write for them—but maybe to do it a little better and to do it in a little more sophisticated and adult manner than what you see in the run-of-the-mill contemporary comic."

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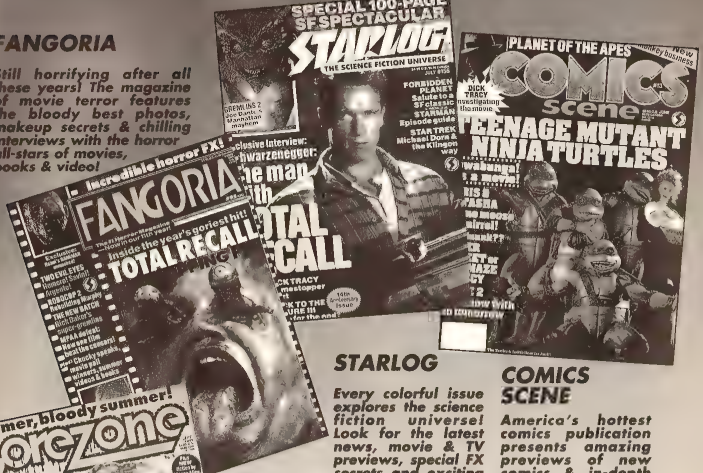

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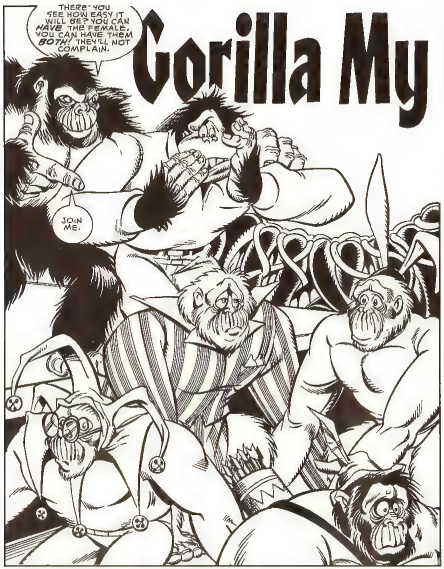
Gorilla My Dreams

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL



Finally! A series that gives proper respect to its characters.

Some comics creators spend their entire lives itching for the chance to write and draw Superman; others would beg for the opportunity to control the life of Spider-Man. Not Phil Foglio—his dream assignment, about to come true, is *Angel & the Ape*.

Angel & the Ape? The 1960s humor title about a pretty girl detective, Angel O'Day, partnered with an intelligent talking ape who moonlights as a comic book artist? THAT *Angel & the Ape*? In heaven's name, why?

"I've lain awake nights, wondering about that," Foglio admits. "The superhero stuff—while I enjoy it—doesn't really touch me as a writer. I can't really get behind the concept of superheroes. I have trouble believing.

"But with *Angel & the Ape*, the only real logic jump is that she has an intelligent, talking gorilla as her partner. That's the one strange thing—everything else goes on from there."

Foglio made his mark in comics by adapting Robert Asprin's *Myth-Adventures* novels to comics for WaRP Graphics, then went on to script *Dynamo Joe* for First, and most recently succeeded in putting the Jack Cole feel back into DC's *Plastic Man*. But that was just a warm-up, as far as Foglio's concerned. Now he gets to try his hand at the *hard* stuff.

It seems it should have been hard enough just convincing the powers-that-be at DC that the adventures of the lovely Miss O'Day and her simian cohort, Sam, had a future in the dark and gritty world of '90s comics. But Foglio says it really wasn't difficult.

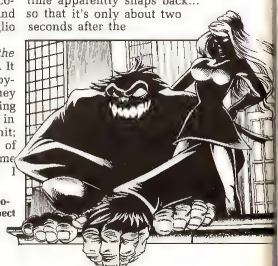
"Convincing DC to try *Angel & the Ape* again was actually pretty easy. It all came down to a question of copyright," he reveals. "God forbid they should lose the copyright to something and have it turn out to be a major hit in other hands. In 1968, it did for shit; this year, it may be great. It's sort of like Steve Martin: He hit the big time in the '70s, but from what I understand, he had been doing the same act for years! Until then, everyone thought it was boring and stupid. Suddenly, people were saying, 'The stuff with the arrow through the head—brilliant!' I'm hoping my writing and art will get people to feel the same way about a girl and a gorilla.

"Actually," Foglio continues, "the concept is so low—'She's a beautiful girl. He's a talking gorilla. Together they solve crime!'—I expect NBC to option this before issue #2 is out."

So, copyright and trademark were the concerns within DC's business offices. On Foglio's end, he confesses to a real fondness for the characters. "There are questions about Angel & the Ape that have never been answered," he points out. "In the first issue, they were just dropped in your lap—boom! They never made any attempt to explain. 'You can't do that to me. I've got to know how this happened—Hell, I'll figure it out myself.' "

Foglio *did* figure it all out, and in the process of solving the mystery in this four-issue mini-series, Angel & the Ape's entire past parades before us, as necessary information to understand the ramifications of what's happening.

The series opens as Sam goes to the bank, and suddenly, every human being in the bank turns into a gorilla. Even more interestingly, Sam turns into a human being. He wanders around, wondering what's happened. The formerly human gorillas, however, are simple, ordinary, unintelligent apes. After several minutes, everything snaps back to normal. More than that, time apparently snaps back... so that it's only about two seconds after the



" 'She's a beautiful girl. He's a talking gorilla. Together they solve crime!'—I expect NBC to option this before issue #2 is out," declares Foglio.

transformation. And the only one who seems to remember that it happened is Sam. At this point, all the humans realize there's a gorilla in the bank.

OK—why didn't they notice before then? Ahhh, that's one of the questions Foglio has answered.

"One of the changes I made was to give Sam a form of mental powers—something he had to have for the character to be viable," the writer/artist explains. "In the old series, people always reacted to his presence—'It's a gorilla!' You got the impression there was no way Sam could function in society. But they gave clues that he could—he owned a car, he had a driver's license, he had a private detective's license, a tailor who made his clothes, he rented an apartment. These are *not* things society is willing to do for a gorilla! His mental powers allow him to make people not notice he's a gorilla. He can broadcast a general 'don't notice me' signal. In the old series, when people would notice he's a gorilla, something was distracting him—he was fighting or being chased—he was too busy to broadcast."

Anyway, Sam recovers enough to broadcast his "ignore me" message and goes back to tell Angel, who doesn't remember it either. Sam realizes that the security camera may have caught the effect. And in a single frame of the tape, everyone in the bank is an ape.

"Then, they're off trying to find out why this happened."

Hold it right there, Foglio. Where did an intelligent ape with telepathic powers come from? Well, since *Angel & the Ape* is firmly in mainstream DC continuity, longtime *Flash* fans should already have a hint. "I could never figure out why nobody caught on before," Foglio says. "Sam is from Gorilla City [hometown of Flash villain Gorilla Grodd].

"Grodd is Sam's grandfather...and when the gorillas realized that he had a variant of Grodd's powers—'Another one; that's all we need'—they gave him a very hard time of it. After a while, he just left."

But Grodd isn't the only connection between *Angel & the Ape* and the rest of DC's publishing history. Angel O'Day also has familiar relatives.

"In the first issue, we find out Angel has a half-sister, Dumb Bunny of the Inferior Five," Foglio says. "This allows me to bring in the rest of that team. And I just recently got permission to do an Inferior Five mini-series for DC, parts of which will pick up from the *Angel & the Ape* mini-series."

Also, Foglio has been given the final

(continued on page 68)

And for his next trick, Phil Foglio plans to do an Inferior Five mini-series—with any surviving members, that is.

YOU? ALONE? GET OUT OF HERE, I'M SUPERGORILLA GRODD, I'VE BATTLED THE JUSTICE LEAGUE! BACK WHEN THAT MEANT SOMETHING!
I DIDN'T SAY I'D DO IT ALONE. YOU'RE FACING THE INFERIOR FIVE! RIGHT,
WHOOPS! WELL, THERE GOES THE OLD ELEMENT OF SURPRISE!
THE BLIMP
VOTE
BUNNY, NO!
MERRY-MAN!
I DON'T SUPPOSE WE CAN GO HOME NOW?
HA! INTO THE FRAY, INFERIOR FIVE, FORWARD!
AWKWARD MAN!
WHITE FEATHER!
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING.
SMAK!
YOU DID SOMETHING TO US AND I'M TIRED OF IT.
TIRED? WELL THEN, I BID YOU--
--GOOD NIGHT.
ATHENA!
ARK-SNAP!
EEK.

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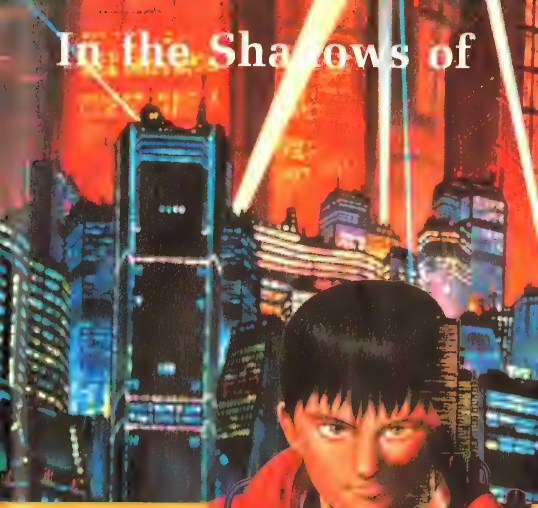
In the Shadows of NEO TOKYO



Neo Tokyo mirrors modern-day Japan with the lingerings of past and present wars.

For Katsuhiro Otomo, animated reality lies in the world of "Akira."

By JAMI BERNARD

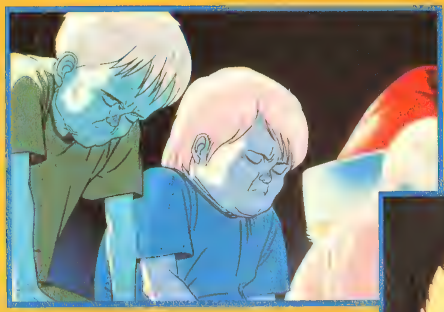
New York of 1990 could nearly substitute for the world of Neo Tokyo, year 2019. In New York, youths are running in packs, flexing their muscle, committing crimes and damage normally done by adults twice their age. The landscape of towering chrome-and-glass buildings can look at once glittering and threatening. Just as in Neo Tokyo, 30 years after World War III.

Cartoonist Katsuhiro Otomo is more familiar with the futuristic world of Neo Tokyo than with present-day New York, but he's here to oversee the Gotham opening of his animated film, *Akira*, which is slowly unspooling across the United States. While a movie like *Robocop 2*, to which Otomo refers when justifying the violence of *Akira*, can open in hundreds of theaters at once, *Akira* requires a special roll-out, because it is a special film. The distribution company Streamline Pictures is handling *Akira* after it was turned down as unmarketable by no less than George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, who both loved it but didn't think major distribution outlets were ready for such material.

Otomo's phenomenal following in the U.S. can be attributed to the Epic Comics series that has been updating this country on what Japan has known about since December 6, 1982, when *Akira* the comic strip first began appearing in the popular bi-weekly *Young Magazine*, whose circulation is roughly 1.5 million. It is a magazine devoted to "manga," the Japanese comics that are flipped through voraciously by children and adults alike. There are manga for girls, boys, teens, men, women, "all age groups up to 50," says the 35-year-old Otomo. Manga are more eagerly (and quickly!) consumed than ceremonial tea, and are as ingrained into Japanese reading habits as the daily newspaper.

The story of *Akira* is a complex one, dealing with children whose extrasensory powers were developed by the military in a secret experiment. The child Akira is the one on whom the experiments were most successful; his enormous powers have been sleeping under the city of Neo Tokyo, until another child with similar powers comes along—Tetsuo, the runt of a gang of biker teens. It is telling that Tetsuo, like many an adolescent, and like Japan itself in view of history, first suffers from an inferiority complex because of his smallness and then overcompensates when he realizes his power. "It's not my fault I'm smaller!" he rails at the world. "Someday I'll show all of you!"

And he does. As he awakens to his new powers, the city of Neo



"It took a great deal of time to adjust a story that had been running for six years into a two-hour time frame," explains Otomo.

Tokyo trembles. Glass shards come raining down; *Akira* begins and ends with a mushroom cloud.

"Even though Japan hasn't been involved in a war in all of this time, the mass media, television, newspapers are filled with daily reports, we are surrounded by it, and I'm just part of that whole experience," says Otomo through an American translator.

Before *Akira* came dubbed in English to the U.S., it was a hot ticket on the videocassette market at conventions, even though it was in Japanese. Its post-apocalyptic themes and violence, combined with superb animation and lavishly intricate backgrounds, make it a feast for adult eyes. It is also truer to the look of the original comic than most animation to their sources, like a slick graphic novel come to life.

Unfortunately, there's still the perception in the U.S. that animation is for kiddies, which is why Spielberg and Lucas didn't know quite what to do with it. The two of them have their own animated project, *Cyber*, which they haven't been able to push through Hollywood for several years.

Yet the fans of *Akira* have turned out for the movie in droves. "I was surprised by the response here in America," says Otomo, "especially because I made it for the Japanese audience, *not* for the world audience. It was quite a surprise to see how it has been received."

Although he has gone on record saying that he never intended *Akira* for animation, he admits now that the idea for the film came to him "about half-way through the comic book's production. I have many friends who are animators in Japan, and they have been pushing me for quite some time to animate this, but the precondition was that there would be enough money in the production budget to do it correctly. And one of the key points was to match the lip movements to the actual sounds."

In America, this is done routinely: The dialogue is recorded first, the lip movements then drawn in sync to the

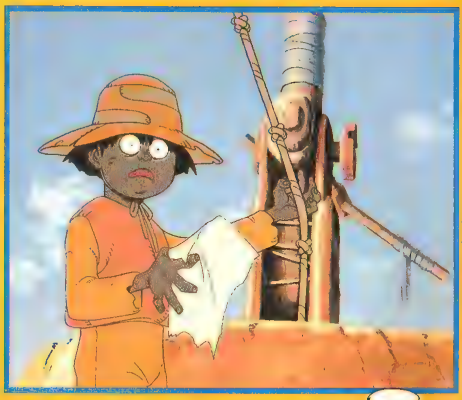
Although common in American animation, *Akira* was the first Japanese film to animate to a previously recorded soundtrack.

Both George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, who loved the film, turned down *Akira*, feeling even they couldn't sell it to an audience that feels animation is for kiddies.

All Akira Movie Art Courtesy Streamline Pictures

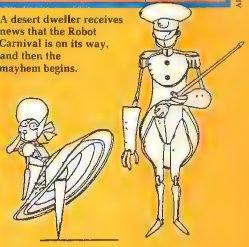
soundtrack. But *Akira* marked the first time Japan dispensed with "lipflapping," and in the American way, recorded the soundtrack first. It took the actors some getting used to, and of course the effort is lost on American fans because of the English dubbing, but it was a great step forward in Japanimation.

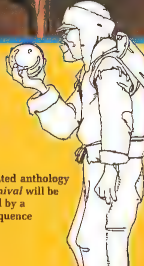
If New York can be scarier than Neo Tokyo, Otomo wouldn't know it from where he's sitting, in the lobby of the upscale Royalton Hotel, which is decorated in a neo-Japanese style with white canvas fittings over the furniture and a spare, black and white look. Otomo sips tea, which is replenished for him not by the Royalton staff, but by his own retinue, which is larger and more eager to please than Eddie Murphy's entourage of cousins and hangers-on. Otomo's people are mostly businessmen: his publishers, one of the movie's line producers, a representative of *Young Magazine*, a liaison with Marvel, an American interpreter and Jerry Beck, who runs Streamline Pictures.



All Robot Carnival Art & Sketches: Katsuhiro Otomo

A desert dweller receives news that the Robot Carnival is on its way, and then the mayhem begins.





The animated anthology *Robot Carnival* will be highlighted by a framing sequence by Otomo.

With his retinue hanging on his every word, Otomo can afford to speak in a very soft voice. He appears to be shy, or maybe he's ill at ease in the way creative people often are when being asked about the business of creation. Wearing Nikes and a corduroy jacket, he answers questions through his interpreter, then looks dreamily out the window.

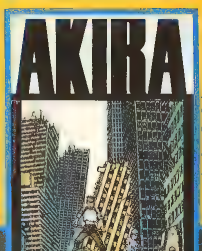
The hardest thing in making *Akira*, which runs 124 minutes, was deciding what to leave out. "It took a great deal of time to adjust a story that had been running for six years into a two-hour time frame," says Otomo. "It's probably best to look at the result as a digest of the entire story. I'm often criticized about why I made the film so long, but it was essential in order to get the entire story in."

It took approximately 160,000 cels or drawings to complete *Akira*, work which was farmed out to smaller animation studios in Japan. "Even in Japan, it is fairly unusual to make the jump from comics to animation," says Otomo. "Comics remain a unique field. The entire time I was writing the comic, though, I was thinking, how can I make this into something that moves? So, when it came time to make the film, it was an easy transition for me."

Most comics in Japan are in black and white, but Otomo would do several color pages each issue, so he had a certain color scheme in mind. All of the Marvel issues are in color, however. "When Marvel first decided to do the project, they sent samples from

many different colorists, and I chose one whom I wanted to work with, Steve Oliff. And for the first several issues, I created a color guide, and very soon, I realized that Steve and I were thinking along the same lines, and I now leave it entirely up to him."

The Marvel series will complete the entire *Akira* cycle, even though it's



F. Art: Katsuhiro Otomo/Epic Books

Katsushiro Otomo visited the Marvel offices during *Akira*'s New York premiere here with the Epic team adapting the series (left to right): Carl Potts, Jo Duffy, Marie Javins and Marcus McLaurin.

Photo: World Wide Photos Inc. Courtesy Marvel

currently several years behind Japan, which has finished *Akira* and is doing both a hardcover and paperback compilation in black and white.

Like his character Tetsuo, Otomo implies that yes, he suffered from adolescent angst, but that "there's a part of me in all the characters I draw. I can't draw strangers." He says he always wanted to be a cartoonist, which in Japan is as normal a career goal as, say, wanting to be a fireman here. Otomo is extremely circumspect about his own life. He is married, and has a nine-year-old boy and a five-year-old girl, neither of whom are yet allowed to read *Akira*. He works in a studio at the back of his house in Tokyo.

Character drawings for Otomo's *Robot Carnival* sequence.

"On the surface, *Akira* appears to be a story about psychic phenomena surrounding one boy, Akira, but I prefer to think of it as a story of friendship between Kaneda and Tetsuo."

Kaneda is the leader of Tetsuo's gang. He is considered by the others to be egotistical, which is risky business in conformist Japan. Kaneda attempts to rescue Tetsuo after he's kidnapped by the military and learns to exercise his powers, including during a frightening sequence in which his childhood toys come to life and creep over his pillow.

"I had several very close friends, including one who died," admits Otomo in a moment of candor. "It's really the story of how two young boys who were so close in their childhood could gradually grow apart due to environment, politics and all the other things in their lives."

In addition to the *Akira* comic, Otomo won a science fiction award in 1983 for *A Child's Dream*, and also drew *Feeling War* and *Fire Ball*. He designed the characters for the animated movie *Harmagedon*, and directed an episode for the omnibus film featurette *Manie-Manie*.

Otomo is ready to move on from *Akira* to other comics, animated features and live-action. He's currently making a low-budget live-action SF movie called *World Apartment Horror*, one of those titles that doesn't quite translate into English. "It's the story of a small, dirty apartment building in Tokyo that's inhabited by all these people who have come in from Southeast Asia who are doing manual labor. Some Yakuza, gangsters, buy the property in order to tear it down for a highrise. They send their toughs to force these Southeast Asians out of the building, and at that point, ghosts start to appear. They are more like monsters, not spirits of the dead. They are ghosts from Southeast Asia and India, from all over Asia. Japanese-style ghosts rather than Casper the Friendly Ghost kind."

But perhaps his most unlikely new project is a collaboration with Alejandro Jodorowsky, the brilliant but oddball Chilean-born director (and occasional comic book writer) who made the midnight movies *El Topo* and *Holy Mountain*. "I'll make a comic based on his work, on *Santa Sangre*," Otomo says.

Santa Sangre (previewed in GOREZONE #13) is a visually stunning gross-out fest of blood and guts, religion and irreverence, Oedipal revulsion, sanctimonious salvation and unforgettable images as indelible as bloodstains on the sheets. It's about a boy, Fenix—yes, like a Phoenix—whose father is a fat circus ringmaster and hypnotic seducer of women. Fenix's mother, Concha, is a fiery religious nut who worships at the shrine of a woman whose arms were lopped off after a rape. The mother kills the father when she catches him in the arms of the tattooed lady, but not before the father cuts her arms off like the totem she worships. The boy Fenix grows up to act as his mother's arms, by slipping his own through her sleeves in a grotesque pantomime of normalcy.

Jodorowsky is known to be changeable, fanatical, difficult, hard to understand. Otomo sits quietly,

(continued on page 66)

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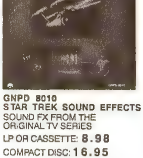

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Magnus

(continued from page 20)

you have to understand that philosophy. That's the real answer: It's a difference between technique and philosophy. If I were trying to draw like Russ Manning, I would be trying to copy his technique; what I'm trying to do instead is understand his philosophy of design in this clean-looking future world. Once you figure out that philosophy, your own artistic style will fit."

And Jim Shooter's goal? To make the *Magnus* of the '90s as memorable as the original. "Magnus was always one of my favorite characters as a kid," he remembers. "Generally, many comics in that period that weren't from Marvel or DC were kind of disappointing. I remember picking up comics from other companies—a few Charltons, a few other Gold Keys—and they were never as good as the covers would indicate. But with *Magnus*, with the Russ Manning artwork and some pretty good stories, I was fascinated; it was great stuff.

"After I left Marvel, I thought about starting my own publishing company. I wondered why no one had ever picked up the rights to *Magnus*, why it *wasn't* being published," Shooter points out. "I went after it and got the rights. Actually, it seems like many people got the idea the same time I did. About the time I acquired the rights, a parade of people came to Western Publishing looking for exactly the same rights. The licensing guy I was dealing with there, Ray Buttman, would call me every couple of days and say, 'Guess who else turned up looking for these rights?' And they were big names—Marvel, DC and other companies. So, I got it just in time.

"I think that character and those particular stories, judged in the context of the times, were really outstanding. And the other characters from Gold Key/Western Publishing, some were pretty good and many of them had potential that wasn't realized. *Magnus* is the first one we're doing, but we have the rights to all of them. The next one coming up is *Dr. Solar*. I thought they had a terrific amount of unrealized potential and that *Magnus* was already one of the better comics that had ever been published. The Russ Manning art was some of the best ever done in comics; and you have to judge the stories in the context of the times. Some of them hold up very well and all of them were good in the context of the '60s."

And, if Valiant's plans work out, readers of the new *Magnus* may be able to say the same in 25 years.

Character drawing for Otomo's *Robot Carnival* sequence.

Akira

(continued from page 64)

hands gently folded, looking out the window. When it is mentioned in English that it's hard to conceive of two more different people, Otomo turns from the window and laughs. He understands English after all.

Another coming Otomo project is the animated *Robot Carnival*. "It was the producer's idea to do an anthology of robot animation. Mine is about a desert dweller family. A brochure arrives that says the Robot Carnival is coming. Mechanical characters blow the town up." And that's just for the opening credits.

Other animators contributed their own segments, and then Otomo animated the ending credits, which he describes as a sequel to the movie's opening. "The title comes from the first episode of *Astroboy*, where the scientist's son is killed, and he builds a robot to replace him. The movie doesn't have anything else to do with *Astroboy* after that."

So far, *Akira* has sold 60,000 videos, 40,000 laserdiscs, and enjoyed a box office gross of $10 million—all in Japan alone. Publishing companies are fighting for the comic-book rights all over Europe; England, France and Germany have already begun the *Akira* series while in America the translated video version is available in comic shops.

When Otomo has finished his tea, he is ready to experience New York. Having lived for eight years virtually in the shadow of Neo Tokyo, he should know his way around pretty well.

Shipp

(continued from page 37)

choices. There's no time to screw around and forget lines when you're shooting an hour every day."

He has also appeared in the plays *Safe Sex*, *Tamara* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and the musicals *Sit Down and Eat Before Our Love Gets Cold* and *Philco Blues*.

Shipp is aware that the future of *The Flash* is still a question mark and claims to have his fingers crossed. However, he has some definite ideas of where he would like to see the series go should *The Flash* survive to a second season.

"I would like to see as many psychological aspects of the Flash explored as the writers can come up with. We've had a couple of episodes that have hinted at the fact that this power might be affecting Barry's mind. There's room for more of that. I think it would be fantastic to do a story where Barry starts abusing his power and becomes a vigilante and actually gets off on being that way."

Shipp is also of the opinion that the Scarlet Speedster shouldn't always triumph.

"I think it would help, help, help if the Flash were to lose just once. I would love to see him lose through the unethical use of his powers. I don't think it would hurt to show people that with super powers comes super-responsibility."

Shipp is a bit vague as to immediate plans for the show. Whether the Flash will ever fight villains from the comic books is still up in the air, although Mark Hamill is currently shooting an episode as the Trickster. He also reports that there's a script being developed that would put an unexpected twist on his budding romance with Tina McGee.

"An idea is being thrown around that would have the Flash go into the future, where he would have a disastrous relationship with Tina," Shipp says. "Eventually, he would return to the present and, at a crucial moment, decide to short circuit that relationship."

John Wesley Shipp sneezes. In a few moments, he will once again be out in front of the cameras, risking life, limb and a very bad cold all in the name of doing right by a time-honored character.

"I think the Flash will work," he concludes, "as long as they can continue to keep him human. If we can hook people into caring about Barry, Tina and the others, then when Barry becomes the Flash, we'll already know a lot about him and be able to root for him all the more."

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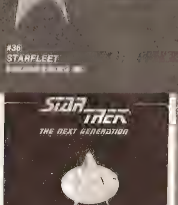

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Metropol

(continued from page 51)

just to see how I would do it, because I love the old Ditko character. And the other character I really liked was Kamandi. That's the *only* book I really looked forward to every month. I'm sure it inspired me to the point of saying, 'There can be comics with just normal guys with blue pants and a gun fighting these creatures.' That would be another book I would like to try," he says, citing Jack Kirby and Richard Corben as the two biggest influences on his art.

Metropol is being released as 12-issue volumes—issues #1 through #12 will be volume one, followed by issues #1 through #12 of volume two, etc. "Even though the volume is self-contained and will tie up the previous chapter, I think of it as being a giant book, and each volume is an individual chapter. When volume two starts, whichever characters survive the first volume will come back, and the story will continue as a new chapter. I've got it plotted for the first four years!"

Perhaps the hardest thing for him to do is to describe his new book.

He says, "It's like *Eddy*. There were high points and low points, slow points and fast points; some books were funny, other books were serious. This is very much along those same lines. There are off-the-wall characters, stuff that's depressing, other stuff that's just dialogue. It would be easy for me to say it's a comedy or a drama—it's not, but it is! I'm having trouble coming up with my own terms!

"It's not like anything else. We need to come up with a new word that fits these kinds of things!" laughs Ted McKeever.

For now, though, there is only one word that describes it best—*Metropol*.

Ape

(continued from page 59)

go-ahead on a mini-series for *Stanley & His Monster*, a comedy concept he already roped into the DC Universe by using the triumvirate of Hell that Neil Gaiman started in *Sandman*.

"I enjoy taking these strange characters and asking, 'Where did they come from—and why?' " Foglio admits. "I always figured that all the weird, humorous characters existed in their own world—Earth-Oksner. And no one noticed when it collapsed during the Crisis. There are bits of all the Earths throughout the one remaining...so there are parts of Earth-Oksner [as in DC humor specialist Bob Oksner] that made it through as well. Greenwich Village dropped in from Earth-Oksner; Haight-Ashbury in Oakland; France, all of it. Why else would they like Jerry Lewis so much?"

But distorting the DC Universe with all these weird and wonderful wackies is not the only way that Foglio spends his time. He has his own small publishing company, Palliard Press, which is about to expand.

"Our first title, *XXXenophile*, is doing tremendously well—#4 is coming out in February and then we'll also go back to press on #1," he explains. "We sold out the first print run of 20,000 on #1, which for black and white comics these days is amazing.

"My second novel with Nick Pollotta is under consideration at two different publishers. *Illegal Aliens*, our first novel, earned out its advance, which is very rare with first novels. I will continue to illustrate the Donning editions of Bob Asprin's *Myth-Adventures* novels as they come out. I would like to have another Buck Godot volume out in the near future...and the *What's New* collection [reprinting Foglio's popular strip from the pages of *Dragon* magazine] should finally be out from Palliard Press this year."

But doesn't Foglio *really* want to be the next John Byrne, Frank Miller or Todd McFarlane? Doesn't he *really* want to be creating the *sturm-und-drang*, the cosmic angst of characters like Batman or the X-Men?

"I don't think I could ever be a mainstream comics guy—I know too much about Mendel and the laws of genetics to ever be able to do a superhero book with a straight face," Phil Foglio sums up. "Quite honestly, I cannot produce enough to do a regularly scheduled book and still be happy with the work I put out. To produce a book month after month—how do they do it? The books that manage to come out every month and stay good? You can count them on the fingers of two hands and not use your thumbs."

Windsor-Smith

(continued from page 25)

ally. That was *X-Men* #53, back in 1968. I've had this pattern for about 25 years of just making things up and hoping people would like it. Because I never talk to editors. And that Blastarr story I just made up as I went along. I just happened to like Blastarr because he was a Jack Kirby character. I don't think it fitted with any continuity at all. It couldn't have. I did it in between Jim Steranko and Werner Roth."

Although *Weapon X* has been completed insofar as its *Marvel Comics Presents* incarnation is concerned, Barry Windsor-Smith isn't yet done with the story. A 150-page graphic novel version will be released on the heels of the serial treatment.

"There were many different character things that I wanted to do in the series," Windsor-Smith explains, "but I kept editing them out because I wanted a certain pace. So, I've got all these ideas that I'm going to throw into the book. I'm going to do an extra 30 or 40 pages so *Weapon X* has more full character development. It's all going to be layered in. When it's all put together, it'll seem like it's one long story."

Windsor-Smith also adds that he's planning to sequel his "Lifedeath" *X-Men* stories featuring Ororo, this time in bookshelf format.

"I really enjoyed doing it," he says of "Lifedeath II." "It was one of my better books. I do like drawing this lady, Ororo. She looks somewhat older the way I draw her. She looks more Grecian, even though she's black. So I thought I would do 'Lifedeath III.' The story was left floating with 'Lifedeath II.' It was never wrapped up the way I wanted it to be wrapped up."

Do all these projects mean there's a renaissance of Barry Windsor-Smith comics work?

"I *should* do more," Windsor-Smith muses, noting that the comics field still exerts a certain fascination for him. "I'm not much in the marketplace because it takes me *forever* to do something. I sometimes dally with the idea of having somebody ink my work because inking is the worst bloody nuisance for me. I'm so fastidious. If I had a good inker, somebody whom I could work with, I would probably put out a hell of a lot more work. An absolutely perfect situation would be what Dave Sim has with Gerhard, where they work in unison and have almost equal input. I would like to do more painting, but I think I want to stay in comics," Barry Windsor-Smith concludes. "It's in my blood."

COMICS REPORTER

Blackhawk's Business

Dan Aykroyd and Steven Spielberg have definitely been talking about a comic book-to-big-budget-film treatment of *Blackhawk*. But, according to Aykroyd, so far it has been all talk and no action.

"My scripting *Blackhawk* is something Steven and I *have* talked about," explains Aykroyd. "But he has been busy and I've been busy and so we really haven't had a chance to solidify anything yet."

Aykroyd, who recently completed triple-threat duty (director/writer/actor) on the dark fantasy-comedy *Nothing But Trouble* (now in release), notes that talks between Spielberg and himself have proven quite intriguing.

"What I've discovered about Steven is that he's very interested in heart and what he's discovered about me is that I'm very interested in hardware. If we can blend those two *elements* together on *Blackhawk*, we could come up with one hell of a movie. But, at this point, word one on the script has yet to be written."

Aykroyd offers that he would most likely be cast in a role in any *Blackhawk* film. "I probably wouldn't be cast as the leader of the group, but I wouldn't mind playing one of the group members. Or maybe a villain. That would be a lot of fun.

"But now that you're telling me that I'm working on *Blackhawk*, I'm going to call Steven up and remind him so we can sit down and talk about it some more."

—Marc Shapiro

Presently, Dan Aykroyd's presiding over *Nothing But Trouble*. His future may include *Blackhawk*.

Nothing But Trouble Photos: Copyright 1991 Warner Bros. Inc.

COMICS screen

These characters are being developed for other media. All projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk (*) have changed status since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately be made.** Abbreviations: S=script; D=director; P=producer; AN=animated; LA=live-action; HB=Hanna-Barbera; WB=Warner Bros.; RB=Rankin-Bass; U=Universal. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 1/11/91)

* **The Addams Family.** Film. Orion. D: Barry Sonnenfeld. S: Caroline Thompson & Larry Wilson. Morticia: Anjelica Huston. Gomez: Raul Julia. Fester: Christopher Lloyd.

The Adventures of Pico & Columbus. AN film. Bavaria Film.

The Airtight Garage. AN. S: Randy Lofficier.

* **Alias.** Film. U. S: Peter Lenkov.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

* **An American Tail.** Sequel. TV series. HB.

Annie. Film sequel. D: Lewis Gilbert.

Ant-Man. Film.

Archie. Film. S: Nora & Delia Ephron. WB.

Arzach. Film. P: Kirk Thatcher.

The Avengers. Film. John Steed. S: Sam Hamm.

* **Batman.** Sequel. S: S. Hamm. D: Tim Burton. AN series debuts '92 on FBC.

Beetle Bailey. Film.

Beetlejuice. AN series on ABC, video & (new spin-off) FBC. Film sequel. S: Warren Skaaren.

* **Blackhawk.** Film. Amblin. S: Dan Aykroyd. (see item)

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

Blondie. Film musical. Disney. S: Alfred Uhry. P: Francine LeFrak, Dean Young.

James Bond. AN series, *Adventures of James Bond Jr.* Fall '91.

Betty Boop. AN *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*. CBS. Film. D: R. Fleischer.

Brenda Starr. Film.

Bugs Bunny. *Tiny Toon Adventures* spin-offs: *Taz Mania* & *Elmyra's Family*.

* **Bullwinkle.** *Boris & Natasha* delayed by MCEG woes. Bullwinkle cartoons debut on video this month.

Captain America. Film. Arena show tour w/ Spidey opens spring '91.

* **Captain Planet.** AN series. Live stage show planned.

Cathy. AN TV. CBS.

Charlie Chan. Film. Chan: B.D. Wong. D: Fred Levinson. P: Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde.

Chicken Man. AN spoof series. Calico.

Chip & Dale. *Rescue Rangers* airing. Film due '91.

City of Darkness. Film. S: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. P: Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber. Columbia.

* **Conan.** Film sequel. S: Charles Edward Pogue.

Daredevil. TV series. (?) P: Shelley Duvall. FBC.

Deathlok. Film.

Dinosaurs for Hire. Film. S: Richard Finney & James Bonny. Fox. FX: Henson C Shop.

DNAgents. Film. UA.

Dr. Strange. Film. Zoetrope. D: Alex Cox. P: F. Coppola.

* **Dreamwalker.** CBS TV film.

Evangeline. Film. Funnybook Films.

Family Dog. AN series. CBS. P: S. Spielberg, Tim Burton, Dennis Klein.

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. P: Bernd Eichinger.

Far Side. AN TV.

* **Fearless Fosdick.** LA & AN TV projects. Nelvana.

Felix the Cat. AN film. Produced, still no release.

Fish Police. AN series. HB. CBS. Film. S: G.K. Wolf. P: M. Uslan, B. Melniker.

The Flash. CBS TV series. WB. (see article)

The Flintstones. Film. Fred: John Goodman. U/Amblin. April shooting.

Fu Manchu. Film. *Secret of Fu Manchu*: David Carradine.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends*.

Ghost Rider. Film. NLine.

* **The Green Arrow.** TV.

The Green Hornet. Film. S: Don Mancini. P: David Kirschner. U.

Green Lantern. Film.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

Heroes for Hire. Film.

Honkytonk Sue. Film.

Human Target. Pilot. ABC. W/ Rick Springfield, Clarence Clemons.

Incredible Hulk. TV movie.

Inspector Gadget. LA TV series. DIC. Family Channel.

Iron Man. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. U.

The Jetsons. LA film. U.

Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film.

Judge Dredd. Film. S:

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Howard Chaykin & John Moore. P: Charles Lippincott.

Justice League. TV movie pilot. NBC. Lorimar.

Kaanga. Film. S: (D) Geoff Edwards, S. Bernard. P: L. Caplin, B. Edwards, T. Adams.

Li'l Abner. TV. P: Max & Micheline Keller.

Little Nemo. AN film. TMS Ent. Songs: Richard & Robert Sherman.

The Lone Ranger. Syndicated TV series.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Film. D: John Bruno. P: Ed Pressman. S: Bill Wisher.

Lucky Luke. TV series. Terence Hill, star. Silvio Berlusconi Comm.

MacDoodle Street. Film. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* strip.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. S/P: Larry Wilson. P: Walter Hill. Carolco.

Mandrake. Film. Italy's Pentafilm.

The Mask. Film. New Line.

* **Mr. A.** Video.

Mr. Jigsaw. AN. RB.

Mr. Magoo. Film. P: S. Tisch. AN film w/ niece, Megan Magoo.

Mr. X. Film. P: Jim Cash & Jack Epps Jr.

Nancy. Film. P: P. Muller.

Negative Man. Bob Kane hero. LA series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. AN/LA.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. S: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Film. P: B. Sherlock, P. Sjoquist, J. Torv, R. Price. S: Ken Shadie. Creator Lee Falk, consultant.

* **Power Pack.** TV pilot. S: Jason Brett. New World & Paragon Ent. Already shot.

Plastic Man. Film. New script underway. WB/Amblin.

Prince Valiant. AN series. Family Channel.

The Prowler. Film. Funnybook Films.

* **The Punisher.** Film. Sequel announced.

Radio Boy. AN. RB.

Reid Fleming. Film. S: creator David Boswell. P: M. Weisman, J. Loeb II.

Richie Rich. Film. RR: Fred Savage. P: J. Silver, J. Davis.

* **RoboCop 3.** S: Frank Miller & Fred Dekker (D). Robo: Robert Burke. Shooting.

* **The Rocketeer.** Film. Disney. Rocketeer: Bill Campbell. D: Joe Johnston. S: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo. P: Lawrence & Charles Gordon, Lloyd Levin. (see article)

* **Roger Rabbit.** New short "Hare in My Soup" in works.

Sgt. Rock. Film. P: Joel Silver, Bob Zemeckis. S: Jeff Boam. WB.

The Shadow. Film. S: David Koepp. P: Martin Bregman. Ú.

Bullwinkle & friends are now cavorting on video.

The Silver Surfer. Film.

The Simpsons. AN. FBC.

* **Speed Racer.** Film. S: Peter Lenkov. P: J. Silver.

* **Spider-Man.** Arena show w/ Cap A opens spring '91. Stage musical. S & lyrics: Barry Harman. Music: Keith Herrmann. EXP: Stan Lee, David J. Nash, Joseph Calamari.

Superboy. Syndicated TV.

Superman. *Superman: The New Movie.* S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. To lense FL.

* **Swamp Thing.** TV. USA. 7 more episodes shooting.

* **Tales from the Crypt.** HBO series. Renewed for third season (13 episodes).

* **Tarzan.** LA series. Worldvision. Shoots spring. 25 episodes. Debuts fall.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** AN series in syndication & on CBS. Film sequel out March. D: M. Pressman. W/ David Warner. New Line. Live show tours.

Terry & the Pirates. Film. S: J. Feiffer. P: G. Kirkwood, J. Hyde. EXP: S. Weston.

Thor. Film. Stonebridge.

Time Beavers. AN TV series. Kushner-Locke.

* **Tin-Tin.** AN series. Nelvana. Ellipse. HBO fall '91. First adaptation: "The Crab with the Golden Claws."

* **Tom & Jerry.** AN, 75-minute film due '92. P/D: Phil Roman. AN *Tom & Jerry Kids* airing.

Trouble with Girls. Film. 20th Fox & Funnybook Films. S: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones. P: M. Peyser, N. Tabachnick.

WARP. Film. S/P: Mark Victor & Michael Grais.

Watchmen. Film. S: Sam Hamm. P: Joel Silver. D: Terry Gilliam. Seeks studio.

* **Why I Hate Saturn.** TV.

Wizard of Id. Film. S: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen.

Wolverine. Film.

Wonder Woman. TV series.

* **The X-Men.** Film. Carolco. AN five-episode mini-series. FBC. Marvel Prod.

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